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THE WORKS OF GILBERT PARKER

IMPERIAL EDITION

VOLUME

XIII

She made a protesting motion

GILBERT PARKER

MICHEL AND ANGÈLE

A TALE OF LOVE, LAUGHTER, AND TEARS
(ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN BOOK FORM AS
"A LADDER OF SWORDS")

JOHN ENDERBY

"THERE IS SORROW ON THE SEA"

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1916

A LADDER OF SWORDS

Copyright, 1904,

BY GILBERT PARKER

Copyright, 1913,

BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

To

THE COUNTESS OF DARNLEY

WHOSE HOME CONTAINS

MANY RELICS AND MEMORIES OF

THE SPACIOUS TIMES OF QUEEN ELIZABETH

THE FRIEND OF

MICHEL AND ANGÈLE

INTRODUCTION

MICHEL AND ANGÈLE

If it does not seem too childish a candour to say so, *Michel and Angèle* always seems to me like some old letter lifted out of an ancient cabinet with the faint perfume of bygone days upon it. Perhaps that is because the story itself had its origin in a true but brief record of some good Huguenots who fled from France and took refuge in England, to be found, as the book declares, at the Walloon Church, in Southampton.

The record in the first paragraphs of the first chapter of the book fascinated my imagination, and I wove round Michel de la Foret and Angèle Aubert a soft, bright cloud of romance which would not leave my vision until I sat down and wrote out what, in the writing, seemed to me a true history. It was as though some telepathy between the days of Elizabeth and our own controlled me—self-hypnotism, I suppose; but still, there it was. The story, in its original form, was first published in *Harper's Weekly* under the name of *Michel and Angèle,* but the fear, I think, that many people would mispronounce the first word of the title, induced me to change it when, double in length, it became a volume called *A Ladder of Swords.*

As it originally appeared, I wrote it in the Island of Jersey, out at the little Bay of Rozel in a house called *La Chaire,* a few yards away from the bay itself, and having a pretty garden with a seat at its highest point, from which, beyond the little bay, the English Channel ran away to the Atlantic. It was written in

complete seclusion. I had no visitors; there was no one near, indeed, except the landlord of the little hotel in the bay, and his wife. All through the Island, however, were people whom I knew, like the Malet de Carterets, the Lemprières, and old General Pipon, for whom the Jersey of three hundred years ago was as near as the Jersey of to-day, so do the Jersiais prize, cultivate, and conserve every hour of its recorded history.

As the sea opens out to a vessel making between the promontories to the main, so, while writing this tale which originally was short, the larger scheme of *The Battle of the Strong* spread out before me, luring me, as though in the distance were the Fortunate Isles. Eight years after *Michel and Angèle* was written and first published in *Harper's Weekly*, I decided to give it the dignity of a full-grown romance. For years I had felt that it had the essentials for a larger canvas, and at the earnest solicitation of Messrs. Harper & Brothers I settled to do what had long been in my mind. The narrative grew as naturally from what it was to larger stature as anything that had been devised upon a greater scale at the beginning; and in London town I had the same joy in the company of Michel and Angèle—and a vastly increased joy in the company of Lemprière, the hulking, joyous giant—as I had years before in Jersey itself when the story first stirred in my mind and reached my pen.

While adverse reviews of the book were few if any, it cannot be said that this romance is a companion in popularity with, for instance, *The Right of Way*. It had its friends, but it has apparently appealed to smaller audiences—to those who watch the world go by; who are not searching for the exposure of life's grim realities; who do not seek the clinic of the soul's tragedies. There was tragedy here, but there was comedy too; there was also joy and faith, patience and courage. The book, taken by itself, could not make a permanent reputation for any man, but it has its place in the scheme of my work, and I would not have it otherwise than it is.

A NOTE

There will be found a few anachronisms in this tale, but none so important as to give a wrong impression of the events of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

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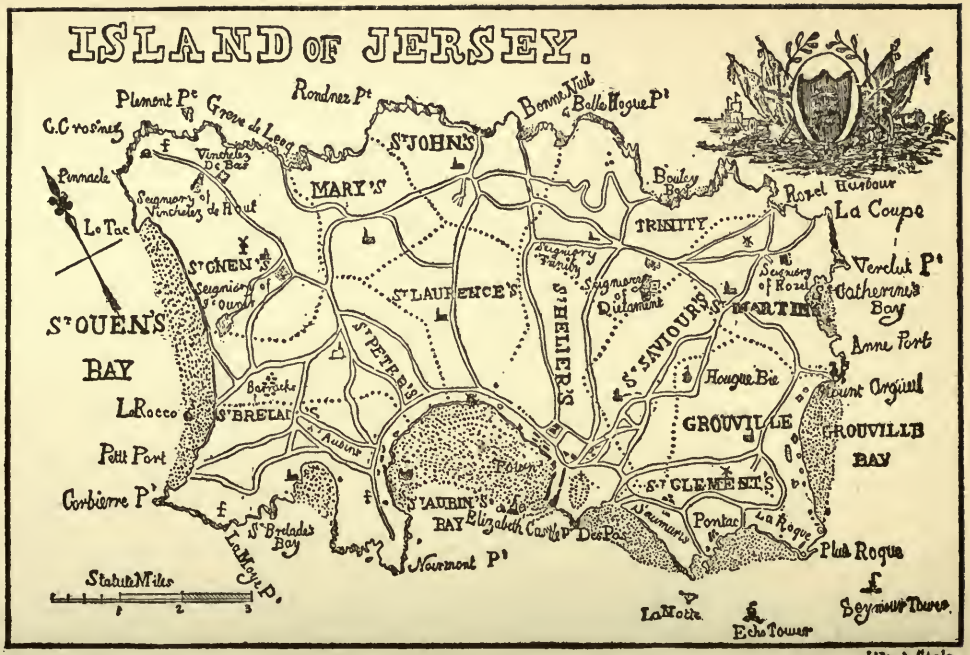
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Pinnacle
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MICHEL AND ANGÈLE

MICHEL AND ANGÈLE

CHAPTER I

If you go to Southampton and search the register of the Walloon Church there, you will find that in the summer of 157—, "*Madame Vefue de Montgomery with all her family and servants were admitted to the Communion*" —"*Tous ceux cj furent Reçus là a Cène du* 157—, *comme passans, sans avoir Rendu Raison de la foj, mes sur la tesmognage de Mons. Forest, Ministre de Madame, quj certifia quj ne coĝnoisoit Rien en tout ceux la poᵗ quoy Il ne leur deust administré la Cène s'il estoit en lieu poᵗ a ferre.*"

There is another striking record, which says that in August of the same year Demoiselle Angèle Claude Aubert, daughter of Monsieur de la Haie Aubert, Councillor of the Parliament of Rouen, was married to Michel de la Forêt, of the most noble Flemish family of that name.

When I first saw these records, now grown dim with time, I fell to wondering what was the real life-history of these two people. Forthwith, in imagination, I began to make their story piece by piece; and I had reached a romantic *dénoûment* satisfactory to myself and in sympathy with fact, when the Angel of Accident stepped forward with some "human documents." Then I found that my tale, woven back from the two obscure records I have given, was the true story of two most unhappy yet most happy people. From the note

struck in my mind, when my finger touched that sorrowful page in the register of the Church of the Refugees at Southampton, had spread out the whole melody and the very book of the song.

One of the later-discovered records was a letter, tear-stained, faded, beautifully written in old French, from Demoiselle Angèle Claude Aubert to Michel de la Forêt at Anvers in March of the year 157—. The letter lies beside me as I write, and I can scarcely believe that three and a quarter centuries have passed since it was written, and that she who wrote it was but eighteen years old at the time. I translate it into English, though it is impossible adequately to carry over either the flavour or the idiom of the language:

Written on this May Day of the year 157—, *at the place hight Rozel in the Manor called of the same of Jersey Isle, to Michel de la Forêt, at Anvers in Flanders.*

Michel,—Thy good letter by safe carriage cometh to my hand, bringing to my heart a lightness it hath not known since that day when I was hastily carried to the port of St. Malo, and thou towards the King his prison. In what great fear have I lived, having no news of thee and fearing all manner of mischance! But our God hath benignly saved thee from death, and me He hath set safely here in this isle of the sea.

Thou hast ever been a brave soldier, enduring and not fearing; thou shalt find enow to keep thy blood stirring in these days of trial and peril to us who are so opprobriously called Les Huguenots. If thou wouldst know more of my mind thereupon, come hither. Safety is here, and work for thee—smugglers and pirates do abound on these coasts, and Popish wolves do harry the flock even in this island province of England. Michel, I plead for the cause which thou hast nobly espoused, but—alas! my selfish heart, where thou art lie work and fighting, and the same high cause, and sadly, I confess, it is for mine own happiness that I ask thee to come. I wot well that escape from France hath peril, that the way hither from that point upon

yonder coast called Carteret is hazardous, but yet—but yet all ways to happiness are set with hazard.

If thou dost come to Carteret thou wilt see two lights turning this-wards: one upon a headland called Tour de Rozel, and one upon the great rock called of the Ecréhos. These will be in line with thy sight by the sands of Hatainville. Near by the Tour de Rozel shall I be watching and awaiting thee. By day and night doth my prayer ascend for thee.

The messenger who bears this to thee (a piratical knave with a most kind heart, having, I am told, a wife in every port of France and of England the south, a most heinous sin!) will wait for thy answer, or will bring thee hither, which is still better. He is worthy of trust if thou makest him swear by the little finger of St. Peter. By all other swearings he doth deceive freely.

The Lord make thee true, Michel. If thou art faithful to me, I shall know how faithful thou art in all; for thy vows to me were most frequent and pronounced, with a full savour that might warrant short seasoning. Yet, because thou mayst still be given to such dear fantasies of truth as were on thy lips in those dark days wherein thy sword saved my life 'twixt Paris and Rouen, I tell thee now that I do love thee, and shall so love when, as my heart inspires me, the cloud shall fall that will hide us from each other forever.

ANGÈLE.

An Afterword:

I doubt not we shall come to the heights where there is peace, though we climb thereto by a ladder of swords. A.

Some years before Angèle's letter was written, Michel de la Forêt had become an officer in the army of Comte Gabriel de Montgomery, and fought with him until what time the great chief was besieged in the Castle of Domfront in Normandy. When the siege grew desperate, Montgomery besought the intrepid young Huguenot soldier to escort Madame de Montgomery to England, to be safe from the oppression and misery sure to follow any mishap to this noble leader of the Camisards.

At the very moment of departure of the refugees from Domfront with the Comtesse, Angèle's messenger—the "piratical knave with the most kind heart"—presented himself, delivered her letter to De la Forêt, and proceeded with the party to the coast of Normandy by St. Brieuc. Embarking there in a lugger which Buonespoir the pirate secured for them, they made for England.

Having come but half-way of the Channel, the lugger was stopped by an English frigate. After much persuasion the captain of the frigate agreed to land Madame de Montgomery upon the island of Jersey, but forced De la Forêt to return to the coast of France; and Buonespoir elected to return with him.

CHAPTER II

MEANWHILE Angèle had gone through many phases of alternate hope and despair. She knew that Montgomery the Camisard was dead, and a rumour, carried by refugees, reached her that De la Forêt had been with him to the end. To this was presently added the word that De la Forêt had been beheaded. But one day she learned that the Comtesse de Montgomery was sheltered by the Governor, Sir Hugh Pawlett, her kinsman, at Mont Orgueil Castle. Thither she went in fear from her refuge at Rozel, and was admitted to the Comtesse. There she learned the joyful truth that De la Forêt had not been slain, and was in hiding on the coast of Normandy.

The long waiting was a sore trial, yet laughter was often upon her lips henceforth. The peasants, the farmers and fishermen of Jersey, at first—as they have ever been—little inclined towards strangers, learned at last to look for her in the fields and upon the shore, and laughed in response, they knew not why, to the quick smiling of her eyes. She even learned to speak their unmusical but friendly Norman-Jersey French. There were at least a half-dozen fishermen who, for her, would have gone at night straight to the Witches' Rock in St. Clement's Bay—and this was bravery unmatched.

It came to be known along the coast that "Ma'm'selle" was waiting for a lover fleeing from the French coast. This gave her fresh interest in the eyes of the serfs and sailors and their women folk, who at first were not inclined towards the Huguenot maiden, partly be-

cause she was French, and partly because she was not a Catholic. But even these, when they saw that she never talked religiously, that she was fast learning to speak their own homely patois, and that in the sickness of their children she was untiring in her kindness, forgave the austerity of the gloomy-browed old man her father, who spoke to them distantly, or never spoke at all; and her position was secure. Then, upon the other hand, the gentry of the manors, seeing the friendship grow between her and the Comtesse de Montgomery at Mont Orgueil Castle, made courteous advances towards her father, and towards herself through him.

She could scarce have counted the number of times she climbed the great hill like a fortress at the lift of the little bay of Rozel, and from the Nez du Guet scanned the sea for a sail and the sky for fair weather. When her eyes were not thus busy, they were searching the lee of the hillside round for yellow lilies, and the valley below for the campion, the daffodil, and the thousand pretty ferns growing in profusion there. Every night she looked out to see that her signal fire was lit upon the Nez du Guet, and she never went to bed without taking one last look over the sea, in the restless inveterate hope which at once sustained her and devoured her.

But the longest waiting must end. It came on the evening of the very day that the Seigneur of Rozel went to Angèle's father and bluntly told him he was ready to forego all Norman-Jersey prejudice against the French and the Huguenot religion, and take Angèle to wife without penny or estate.

In reply to the Seigneur, Monsieur Aubert said that he was conscious of an honour, and referred Monsieur

to his daughter, who must answer for herself; but he must tell Monsieur of Rozel that Monsieur's religion would, in his own sight, be a high bar to the union. To that the Seigneur said that no religion that he had could be a bar to anything at all; and so long as the young lady could manage her household, drive a good bargain with the craftsmen and hucksters, and have the handsomest face and manners in the Channel Islands, he'd ask no more; and she might pray for him and his salvation without let or hindrance.

The Seigneur found the young lady in a little retreat among the rocks, called by the natives *La Chaire*. Here she sat sewing upon some coarse linen for a poor fisherwoman's babe when the Seigneur came near. She heard the *scrunch* of his heels upon the gravel, the clank of his sword upon the rocks, and looked up with a flush, her needle poised; for none should know of her presence in this place save her father. When she saw who was her visitor, she rose. After greeting and compliment, none too finely put, but more generous than fitted with Jersey parsimony, the gentleman of Rozel came at once to the point.

"My name is none too bad," said he—"Raoul Lemprière, of the Lemprières that have been here since Rollo ruled in Normandy. My estate is none worse than any in the whole islands; I have more horses and dogs than any gentleman of my acres; and I am more in favour at court than De Carteret of St. Ouen's. I am the Queen's butler, and I am the first that royal favour granted to set up three dove-cotes, one by St. Aubin's, one by St. Helier's, and one at Rozel: and—and," he added, with a lumbering attempt at humour—"and, on my oath, I'll set up another dove-cote without my sovereign's favour, with your leave alone. By

our Lady, I do love that colour in yon cheek! Just such a colour had my mother when she snatched from the head of my cousin of Carteret's milk-maid wife the bonnet of a lady of quality and bade her get to her heifers. God's beauty! but 'tis a colour of red primroses in thy cheeks and blue campions in thine eyes. Come, I warrant I can deepen that colour"—he bowed low—"Madame of Rozel, if it be not too soon!"

The girl listened to this cheerful and loquacious proposal and courtship all in one, ending with the premature bestowal of a title, in mingled anger, amusement, disdain, and apprehension. Her heart fluttered, then stood still, then flew up in her throat, then grew terribly hot and hurt her, so that she pressed her hand to her bosom as though that might ease it. By the time he had finished, drawn himself up, and struck his foot upon the ground in burly emphasis of his devoted statements, the girl had sufficiently recovered to answer him composedly, and with a little glint of demure humour in her eyes. She loved another man; she did not care so much as a spark for this happy, swearing, swashbuckling gentleman; yet she saw he had meant to do her honour. He had treated her as courteously as was in him to do; he chose her out from all the ladies of his acquaintance to make her an honest offer of his hand—he had said nothing about his heart; he would, should she marry him, throw her scraps of good-humour, bearish tenderness, drink to her health among his fellows, and respect and admire her—even exalt her almost to the rank of a man in his own eyes; and he had the tolerance of the open-hearted and open-handed man. All these things were as much a compliment to her as though she were not a despised Huguenot, an exiled lady of no fortune. She looked at him a moment with an almost solemn

intensity, so that he shifted his ground uneasily, but at once smiled encouragingly, to relieve her embarrassment at the unexpected honour done her. She had remained standing; now, as he made a step towards her, she sank down upon the seat, and waved him back courteously.

"A moment, Monsieur of Rozel," she ventured. "Did my father send you to me?"

He inclined his head and smiled again.

"Did you say to him what you have said to me?" she asked, not quite without a touch of malice.

"I left out about the colour in the cheek," he answered, with a smirk at what he took to be the quickness of his wit.

"You kept your paint-pot for me," she replied softly.

"And the dove-cote, too," he rejoined, bowing finely, and almost carried off his feet by his own brilliance.

She became serious at once—so quickly that he was ill prepared for it, and could do little but stare and pluck at the tassel of his sword; for he was embarrassed before this maiden, who changed as quickly as the currents change under the brow of the Couperon Cliff, behind which lay his manor-house of Rozel.

"I have visited at your manor, Monsieur of Rozel. I have seen the state in which you live, your retainers, your men-at-arms, your farming-folk, and your sailormen. I know how your Queen receives you; how your honour is as stable as your fief."

He drew himself up again proudly. He could understand this speech.

"Your horses and your hounds I have seen," she added, "your men-servants and your maid-servants, your fields of corn, your orchards, and your larder. I

have sometimes broken the Commandment and coveted them and envied you."

"Break the Commandment again, for the last time," he cried, delighted and boisterous. "Let us not waste words, lady. Let's kiss and have it over."

Her eyes flashed. "I coveted them and envied you; but then, I am but a vain girl at times, and vanity is easier to me than humbleness."

"Blood of man, but I cannot understand so various a creature!" he broke in, again puzzled.

"There is a little chapel in the dell beside your manor, Monsieur. If you will go there, and get upon your knees, and pray till the candles no more burn, and the Popish images crumble in their places, you will yet never understand myself or any woman."

"There's no question of Popish images between us," he answered, vainly trying for foothold. "Pray as you please, and I'll see no harm comes to the Mistress of Rozel."

He was out of his bearings and impatient. Religion to him was a dull recreation invented chiefly for women.

She became plain enough now. "'Tis no images nor religion that stands between us," she answered, "though they might well do so. It is that I do not love you, Monsieur of Rozel."

His face, which had slowly clouded, suddenly cleared.

"Love! Love!" He laughed good-humouredly. "Love comes, I'm told, with marriage. But we can do well enough without fugling on that pipe. Come, come, dost think I'm not a proper man and a gentleman? Dost think I'll not use thee well and 'fend thee, Huguenot though thou art, 'gainst trouble or fret or any man's persecutions—be he my Lord Bishop, my Lord Chancellor, or King of France, or any other?"

She came a step closer to him, even as though she would lay a hand upon his arm. "I believe that you would do all that in you lay," she answered steadily. "Yours is a rough wooing, but it is honest—"

"Rough! Rough!" he protested, for he thought he had behaved like some Adonis. Was it not ten years only since he had been at Court!

"Be assured, Monsieur, that I know how to prize the man who speaks after the light given him. I know that you are a brave and valorous gentleman. I must thank you most truly and heartily, but, Monsieur, you and yours are not for me. Seek elsewhere, among your own people, in your own religion and language and position, the Mistress of Rozel."

He was dumfounded. Now he comprehended the plain fact that he had been declined.

"You send me packing!" he blurted out, getting red in the face.

"Ah, no! Say it is my misfortune that I cannot give myself the great honour," she said; in her tone a little disdainful dryness, a little pity, a little feeling that here was a good friend lost.

"It's not because of the French soldier that was with Montgomery at Domfront?—I've heard that story. But he's gone to heaven, and 'tis vain crying for last year's breath," he added, with proud philosophy.

"He is not dead. And if he were," she added, "do you think, Monsieur, that we should find it easier to cross the gulf between us?"

"Tut, tut, that bugbear Love!" he said shortly. "And so you'd lose a good friend for a dead lover? I' faith, I'd befriend thee well if thou wert my wife, Ma'm'selle."

"It is hard for those who need friends to lose them," she answered sadly.

The sorrow of her position crept in upon her and filled her eyes with tears. She turned them to the sea—instinctively towards that point on the shore where she thought it likely Michel might be; as though by looking she might find comfort and support in this hard hour.

Even as she gazed into the soft afternoon light she could see, far over, a little sail standing out towards the Ecréhos. Not once in six months might the coast of France be seen so clearly. One might almost have noted people walking on the beach. This was no good token, for when that coast may be seen with great distinctness a storm follows hard after. The girl knew this; and though she could not know that this was Michel de la Forêt's boat, the possibility fixed itself in her mind. She quickly scanned the horizon. Yes, there in the north-west was gathering a dark-blue haze, hanging like small filmy curtains in the sky.

The Seigneur of Rozel presently broke the silence so awkward for him. He had seen the tears in her eyes, and though he could not guess the cause, he vaguely thought it might be due to his announcement that she had lost a friend. He was magnanimous at once, and he meant what he said and would stand by it through thick and thin.

"Well, well, I'll be thy everlasting friend if not thy husband," he said with ornate generosity. "Cheer thy heart, lady."

With a sudden impulse she seized his hand and kissed it, and, turning, ran swiftly down the rocks towards her home.

He stood and looked after her, then, dumfounded, at the hand she had kissed.

"Blood of my heart!" he said, and shook his head in utter amazement.

Then he turned and looked out upon the Channel. He saw the little boat Angèle had descried making from France. Glancing at the sky, "What fools come there!" he said anxiously.

They were Michel de la Forêt and Buonespoir the pirate, in a black-bellied cutter with red sails.

CHAPTER III

For weeks De la Forêt and Buonespoir had lain in hiding at St. Brieuc. At last Buonespoir declared all was ready once again. He had secured for the Camisard the passport and clothes of a priest who had but just died at Granville. Once again they made the attempt to reach English soil.

Standing out from Carteret on the *Belle Suzanne*, they steered for the light upon the Marmotier Rocks of the Ecréhos, which Angèle had paid a fisherman to keep going every night. This light had caused the French and English frigates some uneasiness, and they had patrolled the Channel from Cap de la Hague to the Bay of St. Brieuc with a vigilance worthy of a larger cause. One fine day an English frigate anchored off the Ecréhos, and the fisherman was seized. He, poor man, swore that he kept the light burning to guide his brother fishermen to and fro between Boulay Bay and the Ecréhos. The captain of the frigate tried severities; but the fisherman stuck to his tale, and the light burned on as before—a lantern stuck upon a pole. One day, with a telescope, Buonespoir had seen the exact position of the staff supporting the light, and had mapped out his course accordingly. He would head straight for the beacon and pass between the Marmotier and the Maître Ile, where is a narrow channel for a boat drawing only a few feet of water. Unless he made this, he must run south and skirt the Ecrivière Rock and bank, where the streams setting over the sandy ridges make a confusing perilous sea to mariners in bad

weather. Else, he must sail north between the Ecréhos and the Dirouilles, in the channel called Ètoc, a tortuous and dangerous passage save in good weather, and then safe only to the mariner who knows the floor of that strait like his own hand. De la Forêt was wholly in the hands of Buonespoir, for he knew nothing of these waters and coasts; also he was a soldier and no sailor.

They cleared Cape Carteret with a fair wind from the north-east, which should carry them safely as the bird flies to the haven of Rozel. The high, pinkish sands of Hatainville were behind them; the treacherous Taillepied Rocks lay to the north, and a sweet sea before. Nothing could have seemed fairer and more hopeful. But a few old fishermen on shore at Carteret shook their heads dubiously, and at Port Bail, some miles below, a disabled naval officer, watching through a glass, rasped out, "Criminals or fools!" But he shrugged his shoulders, for if they were criminals he was sure they would expiate their crimes this night, and if they were fools—he had no pity for fools.

But Buonespoir knew his danger. Truth is, he had chosen this night because they would be safest from pursuit, because no sensible seafaring man, were he King's officer or another, would venture forth upon the impish Channel, save to court disaster. Pirate, and soldier in priest's garb, had frankly taken the chances.

With a fair wind they might, with all canvas set—mainsail, foresail, jib, and fore-topsail—make Rozel Bay within two hours and a quarter. All seemed well for a brief half-hour. Then, even as the passage between the Marmotier and the Ecréhos opened out, the wind suddenly shifted from the north-east to the south-west and a squall came hurrying on them—a few moments too soon; for, had they been clear of the Ecré-

hos, clear of the Taillepieds, Felée Bank, and the Ecrivière, they could have stood out towards the north in a more open sea.

Yet there was one thing in their favour: the tide was now running hard from the north-west, so fighting for them while the wind was against them. Their only safety lay in getting beyond the Ecréhos. If they attempted to run in to the Marmotier for safety, they would presently be at the mercy of the French. To trust their doubtful fortunes and bear on was the only way. The tide was running fast. They gave the mainsail to the wind still more, and bore on towards the passage. At last, as they were opening on it, the wind suddenly veered full north-east. The sails flapped, the boat seemed to hover for a moment, and then a wave swept her towards the rocks. Buonespoir put the helm hard over, she went about, and they close-hauled her as she trembled towards the rocky opening.

This was the critical instant. A heavy sea was running, the gale was blowing hard from the north-east, and under the close-hauled sail the *Belle Suzanne* was lying over dangerously. But the tide, too, was running hard from the south, fighting the wind; and, at the moment when all seemed terribly uncertain, swept them past the opening and into the swift-running channel, where the indraught sucked them through to the more open water beyond.

Although the *Belle Suzanne* was in more open water now, the danger was not over. Ahead lay a treacherous sea, around them roaring winds, and the perilous coast of Jersey beyond all.

"Do you think we shall land?" quietly asked De la Forêt, nodding towards the Jersey coast.

"As many chances 'gainst it as for it, M'sieu'," said

Buonespoir, turning his face to the north, for the wind had veered again to north-east, and he feared its passing to the north-west, giving them a head-wind and a swooping sea.

Night came down, but with a clear sky and a bright moon; the wind, however, not abating. The next three hours were spent in tacking, in beating towards the Jersey coast under seas which almost swamped them. They were standing off about a mile from the island, and could see lighted fires and groups of people upon the shore, when suddenly a gale came out from the south-west, the wind having again shifted. With an oath, Buonespoir put the helm hard over, the *Belle Suzanne* came about quickly, but as the gale struck her, the mast snapped like a pencil, she heeled over, and the two adventurers were engulfed in the waves.

A cry of dismay went up from the watchers on the shore. They turned with a half-conscious sympathy towards Angèle, for her story was known by all, and in her face they read her mortal fear, though she made no cry, but only clasped her hands in agony. Her heart told her that yonder Michel de la Forêt was fighting for his life. For an instant only she stood, the terror of death in her eyes, then she turned to the excited fishermen near.

"Men, oh men," she cried, "will you not save them? Will no one come with me?"

Some shook their heads sullenly, others appeared uncertain, but their wives and children clung to them, and none stirred. Looking round helplessly, Angèle saw the tall figure of the Seigneur of Rozel. He had been watching the scene for some time. Now he came quickly to her.

"Is it the very man?" he asked her, jerking a finger towards the struggling figures in the sea.

"Yes, oh yes," she replied, nodding her head piteously. "God tells my heart it is."

Her father drew near and interposed.

"Let us kneel and pray for two dying men," said he, and straightway knelt upon the sand.

"By St. Martin, we've better medicine than that, apothecary!" said Lemprière of Rozel loudly, and, turning round, summoned two serving-men. "Launch my strong boat," he added. "We will pick these gentlemen from the brine, or know the end of it all."

The men hurried gloomily to the long-boat, ran her down to the shore and into the surf.

"You are going—you are going to save him, dear Seigneur?" asked the girl tremulously.

"To save him—that's to be seen, mistress," answered Lemprière, and advanced to the fishermen. By dint of hard words, and as hearty encouragement and promises, he got a half-dozen strong sailors to man the boat.

A moment after, they were all in. At a motion from the Seigneur, the boat was shot out into the surf, and a cheer from the shore gave heart to De la Forêt and Buonespoir, who were being driven upon the rocks.

The Jerseymen rowed gallantly; and the Seigneur, to give them heart, promised a shilling, a capon, and a gallon of beer to each, if the rescue was made. Again and again the two men seemed to sink beneath the sea, and again and again they came to the surface and battled further, torn, battered, and bloody, but not beaten. Cries of "We're coming, gentles, we're coming!" from the Seigneur of Rozel, came ringing through the surf to the dulled ears of the drowning men, and they struggled on.

There never was a more gallant rescue. Almost at their last gasp the two were rescued.

"Mistress Aubert sends you welcome, sir, if you be Michel de la Forêt," said Lemprière of Rozel, and offered the fugitive his horn of liquor as he lay blown and beaten in the boat.

"I am he," De la Forêt answered. "I owe you my life, Monsieur," he added.

Lemprière laughed. "You owe it to the lady; and I doubt you can properly pay the debt," he answered, with a toss of the head; for had not the lady refused him, the Seigneur of Rozel, six feet six in height, and all else in proportion, while this gentleman was scarce six feet.

"We can have no quarrel upon the point," answered De la Forêt, reaching out his hand; "you have at least done tough work for her, and if I cannot pay in gold, I can in kind. It was a generous deed, and it has made a friend for ever of Michel de la Forêt."

"Raoul Lemprière of Rozel they call me, Michel de la Forêt, and by Rollo the Duke, but I'll take your word in the way of friendship, as the lady yonder takes it for riper fruit! Though, faith, 'tis fruit of a short summer, to my thinking."

All this while Buonespoir the pirate, his face covered with blood, had been swearing by the little finger of St. Peter that each Jerseyman there should have the half of a keg of rum. He went so far in gratitude as to offer the price of ten sheep which he had once secretly raided from the Seigneur of Rozel and sold in France; for which he had been seized on his later return to the island, and had escaped without punishment.

Hearing, Lemprière of Rozel roared at him in anger: "Durst speak to me! For every fleece you thieved I'll

have you flayed with bow-strings if ever I sight your face within my boundaries."

"Then I'll fetch and carry no more for M'sieu' of Rozel," said Buonespoir, in an offended tone, but grinning under his reddish beard.

"When didst fetch and carry for me, varlet?" Lemprière roared again.

"When the Seigneur of Rozel fell from his horse, overslung with sack, the night of the royal Duke's visit, and the footpads were on him, I carried him on my back to the lodge of Rozel Manor. The footpads had scores to settle with the great Rozel."

For a moment the Seigneur stared, then roared again, but this time with laughter.

"By the devil and Rollo, I have sworn to this hour that there was no man in the isle could have carried me on his shoulders. And I was right, for Jersiais you're none, neither by adoption nor grace, but a citizen of the sea."

He laughed again as a wave swept over them, drenching them, and a sudden squall of wind came out of the north. "There's no better head in the isle than mine for measurement and thinking, and I swore no man under eighteen stone could carry me, and I am twenty-five—I take you to be nineteen stone, eh?"

"Nineteen, less two ounces," grinned Buonespoir.

"I'll laugh De Carteret of St. Ouen's out of his stockings over this," answered Lemprière. "Trust me for knowing weights and measures! Look you, varlet, thy sins be forgiven thee. I care not about the fleeces, if there be no more stealing. St. Ouen's has no head—I said no one man in Jersey could have done it—I'm heavier by three stone than any man in the island."

Thereafter there was little speaking among them,

for the danger was greater as they neared the shore. The wind and the sea were against them; the tide, however, was in their favour. Others besides M. Aubert offered up prayers for the safe-landing of the rescued and rescuers. Presently an ancient fisherman broke out into a rude sailor's chanty, and every voice, even those of the two Huguenots, took it up:

"When the Four Winds, the Wrestlers, strive with the Sun,
When the Sun is slain in the dark;
When the stars burn out, and the night cries
To the blind sea-reapers, and they rise,
And the water-ways are stark—
God save us when the reapers reap!
When the ships sweep in with the tide to the shore,
And the little white boats return no more;
When the reapers reap,
Lord give Thy sailors sleep,
If Thou cast us not upon the shore,
To bless Thee evermore:
To walk in Thy sight as heretofore
Though the way of the Lord be steep!
By Thy grace,
Show Thy face,
Lord of the land and the deep!"

The song stilled at last. It died away in the roar of the surf, in the happy cries of foolish women, and the laughter of men back from a dangerous adventure. As the Seigneur's boat was drawn up the shore, Angèle threw herself into the arms of Michel de la Forêt, the soldier dressed as a priest.

Lemprière of Rozel stood abashed before this rich display of feeling. In his hottest youth he could not have made such passionate motions of affection. His feelings ran neither high nor broad, but neither did they run low and muddy. His nature was a straight level of

sensibility—a rough stream between high banks of prejudice, topped with the foam of vanity, now brawling in season, and now going steady and strong to the sea. Angèle had come to feel what he was beneath the surface. She felt how unimaginative he was, and how his humour, which was but the horse-play of vanity, helped him little to understand the world or himself. His vanity was ridiculous, his self-importance was against knowledge or wisdom; and Heaven had given him a small brain, a big and noble heart, a pedigree back to Rollo, and the absurd pride of a little lord in a little land. Angèle knew all this; but realised also that he had offered her all he was able to offer to any woman.

She went now and put out both hands to him. "I shall ever pray God's blessing on the lord of Rozel," she said, in a low voice.

"'Twould fit me no better than St. Ouen's sword fits his fingers. I'll take thine own benison, lady—but on my cheek, not on my hand as this day before at four of the clock." His big voice lowered. "Come, come, the hand thou kissed, it hath been the hand of a friend to thee, as Raoul Lemprière of Rozel said he'd be. Thy lips upon his cheek, though it be but a rough fellow's fancy, and I warrant, come good, come ill, Rozel's face will never be turned from thee. Pooh, pooh! let yon soldier-priest shut his eyes a minute; this is 'tween me and thee; and what's done before the world's without shame."

He stopped short, his black eyes blazing with honest mirth and kindness, his breath short, having spoken in such haste.

Her eyes could scarce see him, so full of tears were they; and, standing on tiptoe, she kissed him upon each cheek.

"'Tis much to get for so little given," she said, with a quiver in her voice; "yet this price for friendship would be too high to pay to any save the Seigneur of Rozel."

She hastily turned to the men who had rescued Michel and Buonespoir. "If I had riches, riches ye should have, brave men of Jersey," she said; "but I have naught save love and thanks, and my prayers too, if ye will have them."

"'Tis a man's duty to save his fellow an' he can," cried a gaunt fisherman, whose daughter was holding to his lips a bowl of conger-eel soup.

"'Twas a good deed to send us forth to save a priest of Holy Church," cried a weazened boat-builder with a giant's arm, as he buried his face in a cup of sack, and plunged his hand into a fishwife's basket of limpets.

"Aye, but what means she by kissing and arm-getting with a priest?" cried a snarling vraic-gatherer. "'Tis some jest upon Holy Church, or yon priest is no better than common men but an idle shame."

By this time Michel was among them. "Priest I am none, but a soldier," he said in a loud voice, and told them bluntly the reasons for his disguise; then, taking a purse from his pocket, thrust into the hands of his rescuers and their families pieces of silver and gave them brave words of thanks.

But the Seigneur was not to be outdone in generosity. His vanity ran high; he was fain to show Angèle what a gorgeous gentleman she had failed to make her own; and he was in ripe good-humour all round.

"Come, ye shall come, all of ye, to the Manor of Rozel, every man and woman here. Ye shall be fed, and fuddled too ye shall be an' ye will; for honest drink which sends to honest sleep hurts no man. To

my kitchen with ye all; and you, messieurs"—turning to M. Aubert and De la Forêt—"and you, Mademoiselle, come, know how open is the door and full the table at my Manor of Rozel—St. Ouen's keeps a beggarly board."

CHAPTER IV

Thus began the friendship of the bragging Seigneur of Rozel for the three Huguenots, all because he had seen tears in a girl's eyes and misunderstood them, and because the same girl had kissed him. His pride was flattered that they should receive protection from him, and the flattery became almost a canonising when De Carteret of St. Ouen's brought him to task for harbouring and comforting the despised Huguenots; for when De Carteret railed he was envious. So henceforth Lemprière played Lord Protector with still more boisterous unction. His pride knew no bounds when, three days after the rescue, Sir Hugh Pawlett, the Governor, answering De la Forêt's letter requesting permission to visit the Comtesse de Montgomery, sent him word to fetch De la Forêt to Mont Orgueil Castle. Clanking and blowing, he was shown into the great hall with De la Forêt, where waited Sir Hugh and the widow of the renowned Camisard. Clanking and purring like an enormous cat, he turned his head away to the window when De la Forêt dropped on his knees and kissed the hand of the Comtesse, whose eyes were full of tears. Clanking and gurgling, he sat to a mighty meal of turbot, eels, lobsters, ormers, capons, boar's head, brawn, and mustard, swan, curlew, and spiced meats. This he washed down with bastard, malmsey, and good ale, topped with almonds, comfits, perfumed cherries with "ipocras," then sprinkled himself with rose-water and dabbled his face and hands in it. Filled to the turret, he lurched to his feet, and drinking to Sir Hugh's toast,

"Her sacred Majesty!" he clanked and roared. "Elizabeth!" as though upon the field of battle. He felt the star of De Carteret declining and Rozel's glory ascending like a comet. Once set in a course, nothing could change him. Other men might err, but once right, the Seigneur of Rozel was everlasting.

Of late he had made the cause of Michel de la Forêt and Angèle Aubert his own. For this he had been raked upon the coals by De Carteret of St. Ouen's and his following, who taunted him with the saying: "Save a thief from hanging and he'll cut your throat." Not that there was ill feeling against De la Forêt in person. He had won most hearts by a frank yet still manner, and his story and love for Angèle had touched the women folk where their hearts were softest. But the island was not true to itself or its history if it did not divide itself into factions, headed by the Seigneurs, and there had been no ground for good division for five years till De la Forêt came.

Short of actual battle, this new strife was the keenest ever known, for Sir Hugh Pawlett was ranged on the side of the Seigneur of Rozel. Kinsman of the Comtesse de Montgomery, of Queen Elizabeth's own Protestant religion, and admiring De la Forêt, he had given every countenance to the Camisard refugee. He had even besought the Royal Court of Jersey to grant a pardon to Buonespoir the pirate, on condition that he should never commit a depredation upon an inhabitant of the island—this he was to swear to by the little finger of St. Peter. Should he break his word, he was to be banished the island for ten years, under penalty of death if he returned. When the hour had come for Buonespoir to take the oath, he failed to appear; and the next morning the Seigneur of St. Ouen's discovered that dur-

ing the night his cellar had been raided of two kegs of canary, many flagons of muscadella, pots of anchovies and boxes of candied "eringo," kept solely for the visit which the Queen had promised the island. There was no doubt of the misdemeanant, for Buonespoir returned to De Carteret from St. Brieuc the gabardine of one of his retainers, in which he had carried off the stolen delicacies.

This aggravated the feud between the partisans of St. Ouen's and Rozel, for Lemprière of Rozel had laughed loudly when he heard of the robbery, and said: "'Tis like St. Ouen's to hoard for a Queen and glut a pirate. We feed as we get at Rozel, and will feed the Court well too when it comes, or I'm no butler to Elizabeth."

But trouble was at hand for Michel and for his protector. The spies of Catherine de Medici, mother of the King of France, were everywhere. These had sent word that De la Forêt was now attached to the meagre suite of the widow of the great Camisard Montgomery, near the Castle of Mont Orgueil. The Medici, having treacherously slain the chief, became mad with desire to slay the lieutenant. She was set to have the man, either through diplomacy with England, or to end him by assassination through her spies. Having determined upon his death, with relentless soul she pursued the cause as closely as though this exiled soldier were a powerful enemy at the head of an army in France.

Thus it was that she wrote to Queen Elizabeth, asking that "this arrant foe of France, this churl, conspirator, and reviler of the Sacraments, be rendered unto our hands for well-deserved punishment as warning to all such evil-doers." She told Elizabeth of De la Forêt's arrival in Jersey, disguised as a priest of the Church of

France, and set forth his doings since landing with the Seigneur of Rozel. Further she went on to say to "our sister of England" that "these dark figures of murder and revolt be a peril to the soft peace of this good realm."

To this, Elizabeth, who had no knowledge of Michel, who desired peace with France at this time, who had favours to ask of Catherine, and who in her own realm had fresh reason to fear conspiracy through the Queen of the Scots and others, replied forthwith that "If this De la Forêt falleth into our hands, and if it were found he had in truth conspired against France its throne, had he a million lives, not one should remain." Having despatched this letter, she straightway sent a messenger to Sir Hugh Pawlett in Jersey, making quest of De la Forêt, and commanding that he should be sent to her in England at once.

When the Queen's messenger arrived at Orgueil Castle, Lemprière chanced to be with Sir Hugh Pawlett, and the contents of Elizabeth's letter were made known to him.

At the moment Monsieur of Rozel was munching macaroons and washing them down with canary. The Governor's announcement was such a shock that he choked and coughed, the crumbs flying in all directions; and another pint of canary must be taken to flush his throat. Thus cleared for action, he struck out.

"'Tis St. Ouen's work," he growled.

"'Tis the work of the Medici," said Sir Hugh. "Read," he added, holding out the paper.

Now Lemprière of Rozel had a poor eye for reading. He had wit enough to wind about the difficulty.

"If I see not the Queen's commands, I've no warrant but Sir Hugh Pawlett's words, and I'll to London and

ask 'fore her Majesty's face if she wrote them, and why. I'll tell my tale and speak my mind, I pledge you, sir."

"You'll offend her Majesty. Her commands are here." Pawlett tapped the letter with his finger.

"I'm butler to the Queen, and she will list to me. I'll not smirk and caper like St. Ouen's; I'll bear me like a man not speaking for himself. I'll speak as Harry her father spoke—straight to the purpose. . . . No, no, no, I'm not to be wheedled, even by a Pawlett, and you shall not ask me. If you want Michel de la Forêt, come and take him. He is in my house. But ye must *take* him, for *come* he shall not!"

"You will not oppose the Queen's officers?"

"De la Forêt is under my roof. He must be taken. I will give him up to no one; and I'll tell my sovereign these things when I see her in her palace."

"I misdoubt you'll play the bear," said Pawlett, with a dry smile.

"The Queen's tongue is none so tame. I'll travel by my star, get sweet or sour."

"Well, well, 'give a man luck, and throw him into the sea,' is the old proverb. I'm coming for your friend to-night."

"I'll be waiting with my fingers on the door, sir," said Rozel, with a grim vanity and an outrageous pride in himself.

CHAPTER V

THE Seigneur of Rozel found De la Forêt at the house of M. Aubert. His face was flushed with hard riding, and perhaps the loving attitude of Michel and Angèle deepened it, for at the garden gate the lovers were saying adieu.

"You have come for Monsieur de la Forêt?" asked Angèle anxiously. Her quick look at the Seigneur's face had told her there were things amiss.

"There's commands from the Queen. They're for the ears of De la Forêt," said the Seigneur.

"I will hear them too," said Angèle, her colour going, her bearing determined.

The Seigneur looked down at her with boyish appreciation, then said to De la Forêt: "Two Queens make claim for you. The wolfish Catherine writes to England for her lost Camisard, with much fool's talk about 'dark figures,' and 'conspirators,' 'churls,' and foes of 'soft peace'; and England takes the bait and sends to Sir Hugh Pawlett yonder. And, in brief, Monsieur, the Governor is to have you under arrest and send you to England. God knows why two Queens make such a pother over a fellow with naught but a sword and a lass to love him—though, come to think, 'a man's a man if he have but a hose on his head,' as the proverb runs."

De la Forêt smiled, then looked grave, as he caught sight of Angèle's face. "'Tis arrest, then?" he asked.

"'Tis come willy nilly," answered the Seigneur. "And once they've forced you from my doors, I'm for England to speak my mind to the Queen. I can make in-

terest for her presence—I hold court office," he added with puffing confidence.

Angèle looked up at him with quick tears, yet with a smile on her lips.

"You are going to England for Michel's sake?" she said in a low voice.

"For Michel, or for you, or for mine honour,—what matter, so that I go!" he answered, then added: "there must be haste to Rozel, friend, lest the Governor take Lemprière's guest like a potato-digger in the fields."

Putting spurs to his horse, he cantered heavily away, not forgetting to wave a pompous farewell to Angèle.

De la Forêt was smiling as he turned to Angèle. She looked wonderingly at him, for she had felt that she must comfort him, and she looked not for this sudden change in his manner.

"Is prison-going so blithe, then?" she asked, with a little uneasy laugh which was half a sob.

"It will bring things to a head," he answered. "After danger and busy days, to be merely safe, it is scarce the life for Michel de la Forêt. I have my duty to the Comtesse; I have my love for you; but I seem of little use by contrast with my past. And yet, and yet," he added, half sadly, "how futile has been all our fighting, so far as human eye can see."

"Nothing is futile that is right, Michel," the girl replied. "Thou hast done as thy soul answered to God's messages: thou hast fought when thou couldst, and thou hast sheathed thy blade when there was naught else to do. Are not both right?"

He clasped her to his breast; then, holding her from him a little, looked into her eyes steadily a moment.

"God hath given thee a true heart, and the true heart hath wisdom," he answered.

"You will not seek escape? Nor resist the Governor?" she asked eagerly.

"Whither should I go? My place is here by you, by the Comtesse de Montgomery. One day it may be I shall return to France, and to our cause—"

"If it be God's will."

"If it be God's will."

"Whatever comes, you will love me, Michel?"

"I will love you, whatever comes."

"Listen." She drew his head down. "I am no dragweight to thy life? Thou wouldst not do otherwise if there were no foolish Angèle?"

He did not hesitate. "What is best is. I might do otherwise if there were no Angèle in my life to pilot my heart, but that were worse for me."

"Thou art the best lover in all the world."

"I hope to make a better husband. To-morrow is carmine-lettered in my calendar, if thou sayst thou wilt still have me under the sword of the Medici."

Her hand pressed her heart suddenly. "Under the sword, if it be God's will," she answered. Then, with a faint smile: "But no, I will not believe the Queen of England will send thee, one of her own Protestant faith, to the Medici."

"And thou wilt marry me?"

"When the Queen of England approves thee," she answered, and buried her face in the hollow of his arm.

An hour later Sir Hugh Pawlett came to the manor-house of Rozel with two-score men-at-arms. The Seigneur himself answered the Governor's knocking, and showed himself in the doorway, with a dozen halberdiers behind him.

"I have come seeking Michel de la Forêt," said the Governor.

"He is my guest."

"I have the Queen's command to take him."

"He is my cherished guest."

"Must I force my way?"

"Is it the Queen's will that blood be shed?"

"The Queen's commands must be obeyed."

"The Queen is a miracle of the world, God save her! What is the charge against him?"

"Summon Michel de la Forêt, 'gainst whom it lies."

"He is my guest; ye shall have him only by force."

The Governor turned to his men. "Force the passage and search the house," he commanded.

The company advanced with levelled pikes, but at a motion from the Seigneur his men fell back before them, and, making a lane, disclosed Michel de la Forêt at the end of it. Michel had not approved of Lemprière's mummery of defence, but he understood from what good spirit it sprung, and how it flattered the Seigneur's vanity to make show of resistance.

The Governor greeted De la Forêt with a sour smile, read to him the Queen's writ, and politely begged his company towards Mont Orgueil Castle.

"I'll fetch other commands from her Majesty, or write me down a pedlar of St. Ouen's follies," the Seigneur said from his doorway, as the Governor and De la Forêt bade him good-bye and took the road to the Castle.

CHAPTER VI

Michel de la Forêt was gone, a prisoner. From the dusk of the trees by the little chapel of Rozel, Angèle had watched his exit in charge of the Governor's men. She had not sought to show her presence: she had seen him—that was comfort to her heart; and she would not mar the memory of that last night's farewell by another before these strangers. She saw with what quiet Michel bore his arrest, and she said to herself, as the last halberdier vanished:

"If the Queen do but speak with him, if she but look upon his face and hear his voice, she must needs deal kindly by him. My Michel—ah, it is a face for all men to trust and all women—"

But she sighed and averted her head as though before prying eyes.

The bell of Rozel Chapel broke gently on the evening air; the sound, softened by the leaves and mellowed by the wood of the great elm-trees, billowed away till it was lost in faint reverberation in the sea beneath the cliffs of the Couperon, where a little craft was coming to anchor in the dead water.

At first the sound of the bell soothed her, softening the thought of the danger to Michel. She moved with it towards the sea, the tones of her grief chiming with it. Presently, as she went, a priest in cassock and robes and stole crossed the path in front of her, an acolyte before him swinging a censer, his voice chanting Latin verses from the service for the sick, in his hands the sacred elements of the sacrament for the dying. The

priest was fat and heavy, his voice was lazy, his eyes expressionless, and his robes were dirty. The plaintive, peaceful sense which the sound of the vesper bell had thrown over Angèle's sad reflections passed away, and the thought smote her that, were it not for such as this black-toothed priest, Michel would not now be on his way to England, a prisoner. To her this vesper bell was the symbol of tyranny and hate. It was fighting, it was martyrdom, it was exile, it was the Medici. All that she had borne, all that her father had borne, the thought of the home lost, the mother dead before her time, the name ruined, the heritage dispossessed, the red war of the Camisards, the rivulets of blood in the streets of Paris and of her loved Rouen, smote upon her mind, and drove her to her knees in the forest glade, her hands upon her ears to shut out the sound of the bell. It came upon her that the bell had said "Peace! Peace!" to her mind when there should be no peace; that it had said "Be patient!" when she should be up and doing; that it had whispered "Stay!" when she should tread the path her lover trod, her feet following in his footsteps as his feet had trod in hers.

She pressed her hands tight upon her ears and prayed with a passion and a fervour she had never known before. A revelation seemed to come upon her, and, for the first time, she was a Huguenot to the core. Hitherto she had suffered for her religion because it was her mother's broken life, her father's faith, and because they had suffered, and her lover had suffered. Her mind had been convinced, her loyalty had been unwavering, her words for the great cause had measured well with her deeds. But new senses were suddenly born in her, new eyes were given to her mind, new powers for endurance to her soul. She saw now as the martyrs of

Meaux had seen; a passionate faith descended on her as it had descended on them; no longer only patient, she was fain for action. Tears rained from her eyes. Her heart burst itself in entreaty and confession.

"Thy light shall be my light, and Thy will my will, O Lord," she cried at the last. "Teach me Thy way, create a right spirit within me. Give me boldness without rashness, and hope without vain thinking. Bear up my arms, O Lord, and save me when falling. A poor Samaritan am I. Give me the water that shall be a well of water springing up to everlasting life, that I thirst not in the fever of doing. Give me the manna of life to eat that I faint not nor cry out in plague, pestilence, or famine. Give me Thy grace, O God, as Thou hast given it to Michel de la Forêt, and guide my feet as I follow him in life and in death, for Christ's sake. Amen."

As she rose from her knees she heard the evening gun from the castle of Mont Orgueil, whither Michel was being borne by the Queen's men. The vesper bell had stopped. Through the wood came the salt savour of the sea on the cool sunset air. She threw back her head and walked swiftly towards it, her heart beating hard, her eyes shining with the light of purpose, her step elastic with the vigour of youth and health. A quarter-hour's walking brought her to the cliff of the Couperon.

As she gazed out over the sea, however, a voice in the bay below caught her ear. She looked down. On the deck of the little craft which had entered the harbour when the vesper bell was ringing stood a man who waved a hand up towards her, then gave a peculiar call. She stared with amazement: it was Buonespoir the pirate. What did this mean? Had God sent this man to her, by his presence to suggest what she should do in this crisis in her life? For even as she ran down the shore

towards him, it came to her mind that Buonespoir should take her in his craft to England.

What to do in England? Who could tell? She only knew that a voice called her to England, to follow the footsteps of Michel de la Forêt, who even this night would be setting forth in the Governor's brigantine for London.

Buonespoir met her upon the shore, grinning like a boy.

"God save you, lady!" he said.

"What brings you hither, friend?" she asked.

If he had said that a voice had called him hither as one called her to England, it had not sounded strange; for she was not thinking that this was one who superstitiously swore by the little finger of St. Peter, but only that he was the man who had brought her Michel from France, who had been a faithful friend to her and to her father.

"What brings me hither?" Buonespoir laughed low in his chest. "Even to fetch to the Seigneur of Rozel, a friend of mine by every token of remembrance, a dozen flagons of golden muscadella."

To Angèle no suggestion flashed that these flagons of muscadella had come from the cellar of the Seigneur of St. Ouen's, where they had been reserved for a certain royal visit. Nothing was in her mind save the one thought—that she must follow Michel.

"Will you take me to England?" she asked, putting a hand quickly on his arm.

He had been laughing hard, picturing to himself what Lemprière of Rozel would say when he sniffed the flagon of St. Ouen's best wine, and for an instant he did not take in the question; but he stared at her now as the laugh slowly subsided through notes of abstraction and her words worked their way into his brain.

"Will you take me, Buonespoir?" she urged.

"Take you—?" he questioned.

"To England."

"And myself to Tyburn?"

"Nay, to the Queen."

"'Tis the same thing. Head of Abel! Elizabeth hath heard of me. The Seigneur of St. Ouen's and others have writ me down a pirate to her. She would not pardon the muscadella," he added, with another laugh, looking down where the flagons lay.

"She must pardon more than that," exclaimed Angèle, and hastily she told him of what had happened to Michel de la Forêt, and why she would go.

"Thy father, then?" he asked, scowling hard in his attempt to think it out.

"He must go with me—I will seek him now."

"It must be at once, i' faith, for how long, think you, can I stay here unharmed? I was sighted off St. Ouen's shore a few hours agone."

"To-night?" she asked.

"By twelve, when we shall have the moon and the tide," he answered. "But hold!" he hastily added. "What, think you, could you and your father do alone in England? And with me it were worse than alone. These be dark times, when strangers have spies at their heels, and all travellers are suspect."

"We will trust in God," she answered.

"Have you money?" he questioned—"for London, not for me," he added hastily.

"Enough," she replied.

"The trust with the money is a weighty matter," he added; "but they suffice not. You must have 'fending."

"There is no one," she answered sadly, "no one save—"

"Save the Seigneur of Rozel!" Buonespoir finished

the sentence. "Good. You to your father, and I to the Seigneur. If you can fetch your father by your pot-of-honey tongue, I'll fetch the great Lemprière with muscadella. Is't a bargain?"

"In which I gain all," she answered, and again touched his arm with her finger-tips.

"You shall be aboard here at ten, and I will join you on the stroke of twelve," he said, and gave a low whistle.

At the signal three men sprang up like magic out of the bowels of the boat beneath them, and scurried over the side; three as ripe knaves as ever cheated stocks and gallows, but simple knaves, unlike their master. Two of them had served with Francis Drake in that good ship of his lying even now not far from Elizabeth's palace at Greenwich. The third was a rogue who had been banished from Jersey for a habitual drunkenness which only attacked him on land—at sea he was sacredly sober. His name was Jean Nicolle. The names of the other two were Hervé Robin and Rouge le Riche, but their master called them by other names.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," said Buonespoir in ceremony, and waved a hand of homage between them and Angèle. "Kiss dirt, and know where duty lies. The lady's word on my ship is law till we anchor at the Queen's Stairs at Greenwich. So, Heaven help you, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!" said Buonespoir.

A wave of humour passed over Angèle's grave face, for a stranger quartet never sailed high seas together: one blind of an eye, one game of a leg, one bald as a bottle and bereft of two front teeth; but Buonespoir was sound of wind and limb, his small face with the big eyes lost in the masses of his red hair, and a body

like Hercules. It flashed through Angèle's mind even as she answered the gurgling salutations of the triumvirate that they had been got together for no gentle summer sailing in the Channel. Her conscience smote her that she should use such churls; but she gave it comfort by the thought that while serving her they could do naught worse; and her cause was good. Yet they presented so bizarre an aspect, their ugliness was so varied and particular, that she almost laughed. Buonespoir understood her thoughts, for with a look of mocking innocence in his great blue eyes he waved a hand again towards the graceless trio, and said, "For deep-sea fishing." Then he solemnly winked at the three.

A moment later Angèle was speeding along the shore towards her home on the farther hillside up the little glen; and within an hour Buonespoir rolled from the dusk of the trees by the manor-house of Rozel and knocked at the door. He carried on his head, as a fish-wife carries a tray of ormers, a basket full of flagons of muscadella; and he did not lower the basket when he was shown into the room where the Seigneur of Rozel was sitting before a trencher of spiced veal and a great pot of ale. Lemprière roared a hearty greeting to the pirate, for he was in a sour humour because of the taking off of Michel de la Forêt; and of all men this pirate-fellow, who had quips and cranks, and had played tricks on his cousin of St. Ouen's, was most welcome.

"What's that on your teacup of a head?" he roared again as Buonespoir grinned pleasure at the greeting.

"Muscadella," said Buonespoir, and lowered the basket to the table.

Lemprière seized a flagon, drew it forth, looked closely

at it, then burst into laughter, and spluttered: "St. Ouen's muscadella, by the hand of Rufus!"

Seizing Buonespoir by the shoulders, he forced him down upon a bench at the table, and pushed the trencher of spiced meat against his chest. "Eat, my noble lord of the sea and master of the cellar," he gurgled out, and, tipping the flagon of muscadella, took a long draught. "God-a-mercy—but it has saved my life," he gasped in satisfaction as he lay back in his great chair, and put his feet on the bench whereon Buonespoir sat.

They raised their flagons and toasted each other, and Lemprière burst forth into song, in the refrain of which Buonespoir joined boisterously:

"King Rufus he did hunt the deer,
With a hey ho, come and kiss me, Dolly!
It was the spring-time of the year,
Hey ho, Dolly shut her eyes!
King Rufus was a bully boy,
He hunted all the day for joy,
Sweet Dolly she was ever coy:
And who would e'er be wise
That looked in Dolly's eyes?

"King Rufus he did have his day,
With a hey ho, come and kiss me, Dolly!
So get ye forth where dun deer play—
Hey ho, Dolly comes again!
The greenwood is the place for me,
For that is where the dun deer be,
'Tis where my Dolly comes to me:
And who would stay at home,
That might with Dolly roam?
Sing hey ho, come and kiss me, Dolly!"

Lemprière, perspiring with the exertion, mopped his forehead, then lapsed into a plaintive mood.

"I've had naught but trouble of late," he wheezed. "Trouble, trouble, trouble, like gnats on a filly's flank!" and in spluttering words, twice bracketed in muscadella, he told of Michel de la Forêt's arrest, and of his purpose to go to England if he could get a boat to take him.

"'Tis that same business brings me here," said Buonespoir, and forthwith told of his meeting with Angèle and what was then agreed upon.

"You to go to England!" cried Lemprière amazed. "They want you for Tyburn there."

"They want me for the gallows here," said Buonespoir. Rolling a piece of spiced meat in his hand, he stuffed it into his mouth and chewed till the grease came out of his eyes, and took eagerly from a servant a flagon of malmsey and a dish of ormers.

"Hush, chew thy tongue a minute!" said the Seigneur, suddenly starting and laying a finger beside his nose. "Hush!" he said again, and looked into the flicker of the candle by him with half-shut eyes.

"May I have no rushes for a bed, and die like a rat in a moat, if I don't get thy pardon too of the Queen, and bring thee back to Jersey, a thorn in the side of De Carteret for ever! He'll look upon thee assoilzied by the Queen, spitting fire in his rage, and no canary or muscadella in his cellar."

It came not to the mind of either that this expedition would be made at cost to themselves. They had not heard of Don Quixote, and their gifts were not imitative. They were of a day when men held their lives as lightly as many men hold their honour now; when championship was as the breath of life to men's nostrils, and to adventure for what was worth having or doing in life the only road of reputation.

Buonespoir was as much a champion in his way as

Lemprière of Rozel. They were of like kidney, though so far apart in rank. Had Lemprière been born as low and as poor as Buonespoir, he would have been a pirate too, no doubt; and had Buonespoir been born as high as the Seigneur, he would have carried himself with the same rough sense of honour, with as ripe a vanity; have been as naïve, as sincere, as true to the real heart of man untaught in the dissimulation of modesty or reserve. When they shook hands across the trencher of spiced veal, it was as man shakes hand with man, not man with master.

They were about to start upon their journey when there came a knocking at the door. On its being opened the bald and toothless Abednego stumbled in with the word that immediately after Angèle and her father came aboard the *Honeyflower* some fifty halberdiers suddenly appeared upon the Couperon. They had at once set sail, and got away even before the sailors had reached the shore. As they had rounded the point, where they were hid from view, Abednego dropped overboard and swam ashore on the rising tide, making his way to the manor to warn Buonespoir. On his way hither, stealing through the trees, he had passed a half-score of halberdiers making for the manor, and he had seen others going towards the shore.

Buonespoir looked to the priming of his pistols, and buckling his belt tightly about him, turned to the Seigneur and said: "I will take my chances with Abednego. Where does she lie—the *Honeyflower*, Abednego?"

"Off the point called Verclut," answered the little man, who had travelled with Francis Drake.

"Good; we will make a run for it, flying dot-and-carry-one as we go."

While they had been speaking the Seigneur had been thinking; and now, even as several figures appeared at a little distance in the trees, making towards the manor, he said, with a loud laugh:

"No. 'Tis the way of a fool to put his head between the door and the jamb. 'Tis but a hundred yards to safety. Follow me—to the sea—Abednego last. This way, bullies!"

Without a word all three left the house and walked on in the order indicated, as De Carteret's halberdiers ran forward threatening.

"Stand!" shouted the sergeant of the halberdiers. "Stand, or we fire!"

But the three walked straight on unheeding. When the sergeant of the men-at-arms recognised the Seigneur, he ordered down the blunderbusses.

"We come for Buonespoir the pirate," said the sergeant.

"Whose warrant?" said the Seigneur, fronting the halberdiers, Buonespoir and Abednego behind him.

"The Seigneur of St. Ouen's," was the reply.

"My compliments to the Seigneur of St. Ouen's, and tell him that Buonespoir is my guest," he bellowed, and strode on, the halberdiers following. Suddenly the Seigneur swerved towards the chapel and quickened his footsteps, the others but a step behind. The sergeant of the halberdiers was in a quandary. He longed to shoot, but dared not, and while he was making up his mind what to do, the Seigneur had reached the chapel door. Opening it, he quickly pushed Buonespoir and Abednego inside, whispering to them, then slammed the door and put his back against it.

There was another moment's hesitation on the sergeant's part, then a door at the other end of the chapel

was heard to open and shut, and the Seigneur laughed loudly. The halberdiers ran round the chapel. There stood Buonespoir and Abednego in a narrow roadway, motionless and unconcerned. The halberdiers rushed forward.

"*Perquage! Perquage! Perquage!*" shouted Buonespoir, and the bright moonlight showed him grinning.

For an instant there was deadly stillness, in which the approaching footsteps of the Seigneur sounded loud.

"*Perquage!*" Buonespoir repeated.

"*Perquage!* Fall back!" said the Seigneur, and waved off the pikes of the halberdiers. "He has sanctuary to the sea."

This narrow road in which the pirates stood was the last of three in the Isle of Jersey running from churches to the sea, in which a criminal was safe from arrest by virtue of an old statute. The other *perquages* had been taken away; but this one of Rozel remained, a concession made by Henry VIII to the father of this Raoul Lemprière. The privilege had been used but once in the present Seigneur's day, because the criminal must be put upon the road from the chapel by the Seigneur himself, and he had used his privilege modestly.

No man in Jersey but knew the sacredness of this *perquage*, though it was ten years since it had been used; and no man, not even the Governor himself, dare lift his hand to one upon that road.

So it was that Buonespoir and Abednego, two fugitives from justice, walked quietly to the sea down the *perquage*, halberdiers, balked of their prey, prowling on their steps and cursing the Seigneur of Rozel for his gift of sanctuary: for the Seigneur of St. Ouen's and the Royal Court had promised each halberdier three

shillings and all the ale he could drink at a sitting, if Buonespoir was brought in alive or dead.

In peace and safety the three boarded the *Honeyflower* off the point called Verclut, and set sail for England, just seven hours after Michel de la Forêt had gone his way upon the Channel, a prisoner.

CHAPTER VII

A FORTNIGHT later, of a Sunday morning, the Lord Chamberlain of England was disturbed out of his usual equanimity. As he was treading the rushes in the presence-chamber of the Royal Palace at Greenwich, his eye busy in inspection—for the Queen would soon pass on her way to chapel—his head nodding right and left to archbishop, bishop, councillors of state, courtiers, and officers of the crown, he heard a rude noise at the door leading into the ante-chapel, where the Queen received petitions from the people. Hurrying thither in shocked anxiety, he found a curled gentleman of the guard, resplendent in red velvet and gold chains, in peevish argument with a boisterous Seigneur of a bronzed good-humoured face, who urged his entrance to the presence-chamber.

The Lord Chamberlain swept down upon the pair like a flamingo with wings outspread. "God's death, what means this turmoil? Her Majesty comes hither!" he cried, and scowled upon the intruder, who now stepped back a little, treading on the toes of a huge sailor with a small head and bushy red hair and beard.

"Because her Majesty comes I come also," the Seigneur interposed grandly.

"What is your name and quality?"

"Yours first, and I shall know how to answer."

"I am the Lord Chamberlain of England."

"And I, my lord, am Lemprière, Seigneur of Rozel—and butler to the Queen."

"Where is Rozel?" asked my Lord Chamberlain.

The face of the Seigneur suddenly flushed, his mouth swelled, and then burst.

"*Where is Rozel!*" he cried in a voice of rage. "Where is Rozel! Have you heard of Hugh Pawlett," he asked, with a huge contempt—"of Governor Hugh Pawlett?" The Lord Chamberlain nodded. "Then ask his Excellency when next you see him, Where is Rozel? But take good counsel and keep your ignorance from the Queen," he added. "She has no love for stupids."

"You say you are butler to the Queen? Whence came your commission?" said the Lord Chamberlain, smiling now; for Lemprière's words and ways were of some simple world where odd folk lived, and his boyish vanity disarmed anger.

"By royal warrant and heritage. And of all of the Jersey Isle, I only may have dove-cotes, which is the everlasting thorn in the side of De Carteret of St. Ouen's. Now will you let me in, my lord?" he said, all in a breath.

At a stir behind him the Lord Chamberlain turned, and with a horrified exclamation hurried away, for the procession from the Queen's apartments had already entered the presence-chamber: gentlemen, barons, earls, knights of the garter, in brave attire, with bare heads and sumptuous calves. The Lord Chamberlain had scarce got to his place when the Chancellor, bearing the seals in a red silk purse, entered, flanked by two gorgeous folk with the royal sceptre and the sword of state in a red scabbard, all flourished with fleur-de-lis. Moving in and out among them all was the Queen's fool, who jested and shook his bells under the noses of the highest.

It was an event of which the Seigneur of Rozel told to his dying day: that he entered the presence-chamber of

the Royal Palace of Greenwich at the same instant as the Queen—"Rozel at one end, Elizabeth at the other, and all the world at gaze," he was wont to say with loud guffaws. But what he spoke of afterwards with preposterous ease and pride was neither pride nor ease at the moment; for the Queen's eyes fell on him as he shoved past the gentlemen who kept the door. For an instant she stood still, regarding him intently, then turned quickly to the Lord Chamberlain in inquiry, and with sharp reproof too in her look. The Lord Chamberlain fell on his knee and with low uncertain voice explained the incident.

Elizabeth again cast her eyes towards Lemprière, and the Court, following her example, scrutinised the Seigneur in varied styles of insolence or curiosity. Lemprière drew himself up with a slashing attempt at composure, but ended by flaming from head to foot, his face shining like a cock's comb, the perspiration standing out like beads upon his forehead, his eyes gone blind with confusion. That was but for a moment, however, and then, Elizabeth's look being slowly withdrawn from him, a curious smile came to her lips, and she said to the Lord Chamberlain: "Let the gentleman remain."

The Queen's fool tripped forward and tapped the Lord Chamberlain on the shoulder. "Let the gentleman remain, gossip, and see you that remaining he goeth not like a fly with his feet in the porridge." With a flippant step before the Seigneur, he shook his bells at him. "Thou shalt stay, Nuncio, and staying speak the truth. So doing you shall be as noted as a comet with three tails. You shall prove that man was made in God's image. So lift thy head and sneeze—sneezing is the fashion here; but see that thou sneeze not thy

head off as they do in Tartary. 'Tis worth remembrance."

Rozel's self-importance and pride had returned. The blood came back to his heart, and he threw out his chest grandly; he even turned to Buonespoir, whose great figure might be seen beyond the door, and winked at him. For a moment he had time to note the doings of the Queen and her courtiers with wide-eyed curiosity. He saw the Earl of Leicester, exquisite, haughty, gallant, fall upon his knee, and Elizabeth slowly pull off her glove and with a none too gracious look give him her hand to kiss, the only favour of the kind granted that day. He saw Cecil, her Minister, introduce a foreign noble, who presented his letters. He heard the Queen speak in a half-dozen different languages, to people of various lands, and he was smitten with amazement.

But as Elizabeth came slowly down the hall, her white silk gown fronted with great pearls flashing back the light, a marchioness bearing the train, the crown on her head glittering as she turned from right to left, her wonderful collar of jewels sparkling on her uncovered bosom, suddenly the mantle of black, silver-shotted silk upon her shoulders became to Lemprière's heated senses a judge's robe, and Elizabeth the august judge of the world. His eyes blinded again, for it was as if she was bearing down upon him. Certainly she was looking at him now, scarce heeding the courtiers who fell to their knees on either side as she came on. The red doublets of the fifty Gentlemen Pensioners—all men of noble families proud to do this humble yet distinguished service—with battle-axes, on either side of her, seemed to Lemprière on the instant like an army with banners threatening him. From the ante-chapel behind him came the cry of the faithful subjects who, as the

gentleman-at-arms fell back from the doorway, had but just caught a glimpse of her Majesty—"Long live Elizabeth!"

It seemed to Lemprière that the Gentlemen Pensioners must beat him down as they passed, yet he stood riveted to the spot; and indeed it was true that he was almost in the path of her Majesty. He was aware that two gentlemen touched him on the shoulder and bade him retire; but the Queen motioned to them to desist. So, with the eyes of the whole court on him again, and Elizabeth's calm curious gaze fixed, as it were, on his forehead, he stood still till the flaming Gentlemen Pensioners were within a few feet of him, and the battle-axes were almost over his head.

The great braggart was no better now than a wisp of grass in the wind, and it was more than homage that bent him to his knees as the Queen looked him full in the eyes. There was a moment's absolute silence, and then she said, with cold condescension:

"By what privilege do you seek our presence?"

"I am Raoul Lemprière, Seigneur of Rozel, your high Majesty," said the choking voice of the Jerseyman.

The Queen raised her eyebrows. "The man seems French. You come from France?"

Lemprière flushed to his hair—the Queen did not know him, then! "From Jersey Isle, your sacred Majesty."

"Jersey Isle is dear to us. And what is your warrant here?"

"I am butler to your Majesty, by your gracious Majesty's patent, and I alone may have dove-cotes in the isle; and I only may have the *perquage*—on your Majesty's patent. It is not even held by De Carteret of St. Ouen's."

The Queen smiled as she had not smiled since she entered the presence-chamber. "God preserve us," she said—"that I should not have recognised you! It is, of course, our faithful Lemprière of Rozel."

The blood came back to the Seigneur's heart, but he did not dare look up yet, and he did not see that Elizabeth was in rare mirth at his words; and though she had no ken or memory of him, she read his nature and was mindful to humour him. Beckoning Leicester to her side, she said a few words in an undertone, to which he replied with a smile more sour than sweet.

"Rise, Monsieur of Rozel," she said.

The Seigneur stood up, and met her gaze faintly.

"And so, proud Seigneur, you must needs flout e'en our Lord Chamberlain, in the name of our butler with three dove-cotes and the *perquage*. In sooth thy office must not be set at naught lightly—not when it is flanked by the *perquage*. By my father's doublet, but that frieze jerkin is well cut; it suits thy figure well—I would that my Lord Leicester here had such a tailor. But this *perquage*—I doubt not there are those here at Court who are most ignorant of its force and moment. My Lord Chamberlain, my Lord Leicester, Cecil here—confusion sits in their faces. The *perquage*, which my father's patent approved, has served us well, I doubt not, is a comfort to our realm and a dignity befitting the wearer of that frieze jerkin. Speak to their better understanding, Monsieur of Rozel."

"Speak, Nuncio, and you shall have comforts, and be given in marriage, multiple or singular, even as I," said the fool, and touched him on the breast with his bells.

Lemprière had recovered his heart, and now was set full sail in the course he had charted for himself in

Jersey. In large words and larger manner he explained most innocently the sacred privilege of *perquage*.

"And how often have you used the right, friend?" asked Elizabeth.

"But once in ten years, your noble Majesty."

"When last?"

"But yesterday a week, your universal Majesty."

Elizabeth raised her eyebrows. "Who was the criminal, what the occasion?"

"The criminal was one Buonespoir, the occasion our coming hither to wait upon the Queen of England and our Lady of Normandy, for such is your well-born Majesty to your loyal Jersiais." And thereupon he plunged into an impeachment of De Carteret of St. Ouen's, and stumbled through a blunt broken story of the wrongs and the sorrows of Michel and Angèle and the doings of Buonespoir in their behalf.

Elizabeth frowned and interrupted him. "I have heard of this Buonespoir, Monsieur, through others than the Seigneur of St. Ouen's. He is an unlikely squire of dames. There's a hill in my kingdom has long bided his coming. Where waits the rascal now?"

"In the ante-chapel, your Majesty."

"By the rood!" said Elizabeth in sudden amazement. "In my ante-chapel, forsooth!"

She looked beyond the doorway and saw the great red-topped figure of Buonespoir, his good-natured, fearless face, his shock of hair, his clear blue eye—he was not thirty feet away.

"He comes to crave pardon for his rank offences, your benignant Majesty," said Lemprière.

The humour of the thing rushed upon the Queen. Never before were two such naïve folk at court. There

was not a hair of duplicity in the heads of the two, and she judged them well in her mind.

"I will see you stand together—you and your henchman," she said to Rozel, and moved on to the antechapel, the Court following. Standing still just inside the doorway, she motioned Buonespoir to come near. The pirate, unconfused, undismayed, with his wide blue asking eyes, came forward and dropped upon his knees. Elizabeth motioned Lemprière to stand a little apart.

Thereupon she set a few questions to Buonespoir, whose replies, truthfully given, showed that he had no real estimate of his crimes, and was indifferent to what might be their penalties. He had no moral sense on the one hand, on the other, no fear.

Suddenly she turned to Lemprière again. "You came, then, to speak for this Michel de la Forêt, the exile—?"

"And for the demoiselle Angèle Aubert, who loves him, your Majesty."

"I sent for this gentleman exile a fortnight ago—" She turned towards Leicester inquiringly.

"I have the papers here, your Majesty," said Leicester, and gave a packet over.

"And where have you De la Forêt?" said Elizabeth.

"In durance, your Majesty."

"When came he hither?"

"Three days gone," answered Leicester, a little gloomily, for there was acerbity in Elizabeth's voice.

Elizabeth seemed about to speak, then dropped her eyes upon the papers, and glanced hastily at their contents.

"You will have this Michel de la Forêt brought to my presence as fast as horse can bring him, my Lord," she said to Leicester. "This rascal of the sea—Buonespoir

—you will have safe bestowed till I recall his existence again," she said to a captain of men-at-arms; "and you, Monsieur of Rozel, since you are my butler, will get you to my dining-room, and do your duty—the office is not all perquisites," she added smoothly. She was about to move on, when a thought seemed to strike her, and she added, "This Mademoiselle and her father whom you brought hither—where are they?"

"They are even within the palace grounds, your imperial Majesty," answered Lemprière.

"You will summon them when I bid you," she said to the Seigneur; "and you shall see that they have comforts and housing as befits their station," she added to the Lord Chamberlain.

So did Elizabeth, out of a whimsical humour, set the highest in the land to attend upon unknown, unconsidered exiles.

CHAPTER VIII

FIVE minutes later, Lemprière of Rozel, as butler to the Queen, saw a sight of which he told to his dying day. When, after varied troubles hereafter set down, he went back to Jersey, he made a speech before the Royal Court, in which he told what chanced while Elizabeth was at chapel.

"There stood I, butler to the Queen," he said, with a large gesture, "but what knew I of butler's duties at Greenwich Palace! Her Majesty had given me an office where all the work was done for me. Odds life, but when I saw the Gentleman of the Rod and his fellow get down on their knees to lay the cloth upon the table, as though it was an altar at Jerusalem, I thought it time to say my prayers. There was naught but kneeling and retiring. Now it was the salt-cellar, the plate, and the bread; then it was a Duke's Daughter—a noble soul as ever lived—with a tasting-knife, as beautiful as a rose; then another lady enters who glares at me, and gets to her knees as does the other. Three times up and down, and then one rubs the plate with bread and salt, as solemn as St. Ouen's when he says prayers in the Royal Court. Gentles, that was a day for Jersey. For there stood I as master of all, the Queen's butler, and the greatest ladies of the land doing my will—though it was all Persian mystery to me, save when the kettle-drums began to beat and the trumpet to blow, and in walk bareheaded the Yeomen of the Guard, all scarlet, with a golden rose on their backs, bringing in a course of twenty-four gold dishes; and I, as Queen's butler, receiving them.

"Then it was I opened my mouth amazed at the endless dishes filled with niceties of earth, and the Duke's Daughter pops onto my tongue a mouthful of the first dish brought, and then does the same to every Yeoman of the Guard that carried a dish—that her notorious Majesty be safe against the hand of poisoners. There was I, fed by a Duke's Daughter; and thus was Jersey honoured; and the Duke's Daughter whispers to me, as a dozen other unmarried ladies enter, 'The Queen liked not the cut of your frieze jerkin better than do I, Seigneur.' With that she joins the others, and they all kneel down and rise up again, and lifting the meat from the table, bear it into the Queen's private chamber.

"When they return, and the Yeomen of the Guard go forth, I am left alone with these ladies, and there stand with twelve pair of eyes upon me, little knowing what to do. There was laughter in the faces of some, and looks less taking in the eyes of others; for my Lord Leicester was to have done the duty I was set to do that day, and he the greatest gallant of the kingdom, as all the world knows. What they said among themselves I know not, but I heard Leicester's name, and I guessed that they were mostly in the pay of his soft words. But the Duke's Daughter was on my side, as was proved betimes when Leicester made trouble for us who went from Jersey to plead the cause of injured folk. Of the Earl's enmity to me—a foolish spite of a great nobleman against a Norman-Jersey gentleman—and of how it injured others for the moment, you all know; but we had him by the heels before the end of it, great earl and favourite as he was."

In the same speech Lemprière told of his audience with the Queen, even as she sat at dinner, and of what

she said to him; but since his words give but a partial picture of events, the relation must not be his.

When the Queen returned from chapel to her apartments, Lemprière was called by an attendant, and he stood behind the Queen's chair until she summoned him to face her. Then, having finished her meal, and dipped her fingers in a bowl of rose-water, she took up the papers Leicester had given her—the Duke's Daughter had read them aloud as she ate—and said:

"Now, my good Seigneur of Rozel, answer me these few questions: First, what concern is it of yours whether this Michel de la Forêt be sent back to France, or die here in England?"

"I helped to save his life at sea—one good turn deserves another, your high-born Majesty."

The Queen looked sharply at him, then burst out laughing.

"God's life, but here's a bull making epigrams!" she said. Then her humour changed. "See you, my butler of Rozel, you shall speak the truth, or I'll have you where that jerkin will fit you not so well a month hence. Plain answers I will have to plain questions, or De Carteret of St. Ouen's shall have his will of you and your precious pirate. So bear yourself as you would save your head and your honours."

Lemprière of Rozel never had a better moment than when he met the Queen of England's threats with faultless intrepidity. "I am concerned about my head, but more about my honours, and most about my honour," he replied. "My head is my own, my honours are my family's, for which I would give my head when needed; and my honour defends both until both are naught—and all are in the service of my Queen."

Smiling, Elizabeth suddenly leaned forward, and, with

a glance of satisfaction towards the Duke's Daughter, who was present, said:

"I had not thought to find so much logic behind your rampant skull," she said. "You've spoken well, Rozel, and you shall speak by the book to the end, if you will save your friends. What concern is it of yours whether Michel de la Forêt live or die?"

"It is a concern of one whom I've sworn to befriend, and that is my concern, your ineffable Majesty."

"Who is the friend?"

"Mademoiselle Aubert."

"The betrothed of this Michel de la Forêt?"

"Even so, your exalted Majesty. But I made sure De la Forêt was dead when I asked her to be my wife."

"Lord, Lord, Lord, hear this vast infant, this hulking baby of a Seigneur, this primeval innocence! Listen to him, cousin," said the Queen, turning again to the Duke's Daughter. "Was ever the like of it in any kingdom of this earth? He chooses a penniless exile—he, a butler to the Queen, with three dove-cotes and the *perquage*—and a Huguenot withal. He is refused; then comes the absent lover over sea, to shipwreck; and our Seigneur rescues him, 'fends him; and when yon master exile is in peril, defies his Queen's commands"—she tapped the papers lying beside her on the table—"then comes to England with the lady to plead the case before his outraged sovereign, with an outlawed buccaneer for comrade and lieutenant. There is the case, is't not?"

"I swore to be her friend," answered Lemprière stubbornly, "and I have done according to my word."

"There's not another nobleman in my kingdom who would not have thought twice about the matter, with the lady aboard his ship on the high seas—'tis a mi-

raculous chivalry, cousin," she added to the Duke's Daughter, who bowed, settled herself again on her velvet cushion, and looked out of the corner of her eyes at Lemprière.

"You opposed Sir Hugh Pawlett's officers who went to arrest this De la Forêt," continued Elizabeth. "Call you that serving your Queen? Pawlett had our commands."

"I opposed them but in form, that the matter might the more surely be brought to your Majesty's knowledge."

"It might easily have brought you to the Tower, man."

"I had faith that your Majesty would do right in this, as in all else. So I came hither to tell the whole story to your judicial Majesty."

"Our thanks for your certificate of character," said the Queen, with amused irony. "What is your wish? Make your words few and plain."

"I desire before all that Michel de la Forêt shall not be returned to the Medici, most radiant Majesty."

"That's plain. But there are weighty matters 'twixt France and England, and De la Forêt may turn the scale one way or another. What follows, beggar of Rozel?"

"That Mademoiselle Aubert and her father may live without let or hindrance in Jersey."

"That you may eat sour grapes *ad eternam?* Next?"

"That Buonespoir be pardoned all offences and let live in Jersey on pledge that he sin no more, not even to raid St. Ouen's cellars of the muscadella reserved for your generous Majesty."

There was such humour in Lemprière's look as he spoke of the muscadella that the Queen questioned him

closely upon Buonespoir's raid; and so infectious was his mirth, as he told the tale, that Elizabeth, though she stamped her foot in assumed impatience, smiled also.

"You shall have your Buonespoir, Seigneur," she said; "but for his future you shall answer as well as he."

"For what he does in Jersey Isle, your commiserate Majesty?"

"For crime elsewhere, if he be caught, he shall march to Tyburn, friend," she answered. Then she hurriedly added: "Straightway go and bring Mademoiselle and her father hither. Orders are given for their disposal. And to-morrow at this hour you shall wait upon me in their company. I thank you for your services as butler this day, Monsieur of Rozel. You do your office rarely."

As the Seigneur left Elizabeth's apartments, he met the Earl of Leicester hurrying thither, preceded by the Queen's messenger. Leicester stopped and said, with a slow malicious smile: "Farming is good, then—you have fine crops this year on your holding?"

The point escaped Lemprière at first, for the favourite's look was all innocence, and he replied: "You are mistook, my lord. You will remember I was in the presence-chamber an hour ago, my lord. I am Lemprière, Seigneur of Rozel, butler to her Majesty."

"But are you, then? I thought you were a farmer and raised cabbages." Smiling, Leicester passed on.

For a moment the Seigneur stood pondering the Earl's words and angrily wondering at his obtuseness. Then suddenly he knew he had been mocked, and he turned and ran after his enemy; but Leicester had vanished into the Queen's apartments.

The Queen's fool was standing near, seemingly en-

gaged in the light occupation of catching imaginary flies, buzzing with his motions. As Leicester disappeared he looked from under his arm at Lemprière. "If a bird will not stop for the salt to its tail, then the salt is damned, Nuncio; and you must cry *David!* and get thee to the quarry."

Lemprière stared at him swelling with rage; but the quaint smiling of the fool conquered him, and instead of turning on his heel, he spread himself like a Colossus and looked down in grandeur. "And wherefore cry *David!* and get quarrying?" he asked. "Come, what sense is there in thy words, when I am wroth with yonder nobleman?"

"Oh, Nuncio, Nuncio, thou art a child of innocence and without history. The salt held not the bird for the net of thy anger, Nuncio; so it is meet that other ways be found. David the ancient put a stone in a sling and Goliath laid him down like an egg in a nest—therefore, Nuncio, get thee to the quarry. Obligato, which is to say Leicester yonder, hath no tail—the devil cut it off and wears it himself. So let salt be damned, and go sling thy stone!"

Lemprière was good-humoured again. He fumbled in his purse and brought forth a gold-piece. "Fool, thou hast spoken like a man born sensible and infinite. I understand thee like a book. Thou hast not folly and thou shalt not be answered as if thou wast a fool. But in terms of gold shalt thou have reply." He put the gold-piece in the fool's hand and slapped him on the shoulder.

"Why now, Nuncio," answered the other, "it is clear that there is a fool at Court, for is it not written that a fool and his money are soon parted? And this gold-piece is still hot with running 'tween thee and me."

Lemprière roared. "Why, then, for thy hit thou shalt have another gold-piece, gossip. But see"—his voice lowered—"know you where is my friend, Buonespoir, the pirate? Know you where he is in durance?"

"As I know marrow in a bone I know where he hides, Nuncio, so come with me," answered the fool.

"If De Carteret had but thy sense, we could live at peace in Jersey," rejoined Lemprière, and strode ponderously after the light-footed fool who capered forth singing:

"Come hither, O come hither,
There's a bride upon her bed;
They have strewn her o'er with roses,
There are roses 'neath her head:
Life is love and tears and laughter,
But the laughter it is dead—
Sing the way to the Valley, to the Valley!
Hey, but the roses they are red!"

CHAPTER IX

The next day at noon, as her Majesty had advised the Seigneur, De la Forêt was ushered into the presence. The Queen's eye quickened as she saw him, and she remarked with secret pleasure the figure and bearing of this young captain of the Huguenots. She loved physical grace and prowess with a full heart. The day had almost passed when she would measure all men against Leicester in his favour; and he, knowing this clearly now, saw with haughty anxiety the gradual passing of his power, and clutched futilely at the vanishing substance. Thus it was that he now spent his strength in getting his way with the Queen in little things. She had been so long used to take his counsel—in some part wise and skilful—that when she at length did without it, or followed her own mind, it became a fever with him to let no chance pass for serving his own will by persuading her out of hers. This was why he had spent an hour the day before in sadly yet vaguely reproaching her for the slight she put upon him in the presence-chamber by her frown; and another in urging her to come to terms with Catherine de Medici in this small affair—since the Frenchwoman had set her revengeful heart upon it—that larger matters might be settled to the gain of England. It was not so much that he had reason to destroy De la Forêt, as that he saw that the Queen was disposed to deal friendly by him and protect him. He did not see the danger of rousing in the Queen the same unreasoning tenaciousness of will upon just such lesser things as might well

be left to her advisers. In spite of which he almost succeeded, this very day, in regaining, for a time at least, the ground he had lost with her. He had never been so adroit, so brilliant, so witty, so insinuating; and he left her with the feeling that if he had his way concerning De la Forêt—a mere stubborn whim, with no fair reason behind it—his influence would be again securely set. The sense of crisis was on him.

On Michel de la Forêt entering the presence the Queen's attention had become riveted. She felt in him a spirit of mastery, yet of unselfish purpose. Here was one, she thought, who might well be in her household, or leading a regiment of her troops. The clear fresh face, curling hair, direct look, quiet energy, and air of nobility—this sort of man could only be begotten of a great cause; he were not possible in idle or prosperous times.

Elizabeth looked him up and down, then affected surprise. "Monsieur de la Forêt," she said, "I do not recognise you in this attire"—glancing towards his dress.

De la Forêt bowed, and Elizabeth continued, looking at a paper in her hand: "You landed on our shores of Jersey in the robes of a priest of France. The passport for a priest of France was found upon your person when our officers in Jersey made search of you. Which is yourself—Michel de la Forêt, soldier, or a priest of France?"

De la Forêt replied gravely that he was a soldier, and that the priestly dress had been but a disguise.

"In which papist attire, methinks, Michel de la Forêt, soldier and Huguenot, must have been ill at ease—the eagle with the vulture's wing. What say you, Monsieur?"

"That vulture's wing hath carried me to a safe dove-

cote, your gracious Majesty," he answered, with a low obeisance.

"I'm none so sure of that, Monsieur," was Elizabeth's answer, and she glanced quizzically at Leicester, who made a gesture of annoyance. "Our cousin France makes you to us a dark intriguer and conspirator, a dangerous weed in our good garden of England, a 'troublous, treacherous violence'—such are you called, Monsieur."

"I am in your high Majesty's power," he answered, "to do with me as it seemeth best. If your Majesty wills it that I be returned to France, I pray you set me upon its coast as I came from it, a fugitive. Thence will I try to find my way to the army and the poor stricken people of whom I was. I pray for that only, and not to be given to the red hand of the Medici."

"Red hand—by my faith, but you are bold, Monsieur!"

Leicester tapped his foot upon the floor impatiently, then caught the Queen's eye, and gave her a meaning look.

De la Forêt saw the look and knew his enemy, but he did not quail. "Bold only by your high Majesty's faith, indeed," he answered the Queen, with harmless guile.

Elizabeth smiled. She loved such flattering speech from a strong man. It touched a chord in her deeper than that under Leicester's finger. Leicester's impatience only made her more self-willed on the instant.

"You speak with the trumpet note, Monsieur," she said to De la Forêt. "We will prove you. You shall have a company in my Lord Leicester's army here, and we will send you upon some service worthy of your fame."

"I crave your Majesty's pardon, but I cannot do it," was De la Forêt's instant reply. "I have sworn that I will lift my sword in one cause only, and to that I must stand. And more—the widow of my dead chief, Gabriel de Montgomery, is set down in this land unsheltered and alone. I have sworn to one who loves her, and for my dead chief's sake, that I will serve her and be near her until better days be come and she may return in quietness to France. In exile we few stricken folk must stand together, your august Majesty."

Elizabeth's eye flashed up. She was impatient of refusal of her favour. She was also a woman, and that De la Forêt should flaunt his devotion to another woman was little to her liking. The woman in her, which had never been blessed with a noble love, was roused. The sourness of a childless, uncompanionable life was stronger for the moment than her strong mind and sense.

"Monsieur has sworn this, and Monsieur has sworn that," she said petulantly—"and to one who loveth a lady, and for a cause—tut, tut, tut!—"

Suddenly a kind of intriguing laugh leaped into her eye, and she turned to Leicester and whispered in his ear. Leicester frowned, then smiled, and glanced up and down De la Forêt's figure impertinently.

"See, Monsieur de la Forêt," she added; "since you will not fight, you shall preach. A priest you came into my kingdom, and a priest you shall remain; but you shall preach good English doctrine and no Popish folly."

De la Forêt started, then composed himself, and before he had time to reply, Elizabeth continued:

"Partly for your own sake am I thus gracious; for as a preacher of the Word I have not need to give you

up, according to agreement with our brother of France. As a rebel and conspirator I were bound to do so, unless you were an officer of my army. The Seigneur of Rozel has spoken for you, and the Comtesse de Montgomery has written a pleading letter. Also I have from another source a tearful prayer—the ink is scarce dry upon it—which has been of service to you. But I myself have chosen this way of escape for you. Prove yourself worthy, and all may be well—but prove yourself you shall. You have prepared your own brine, Monsieur; in it you shall pickle."

She smiled a sour smile, for she was piqued, and added: "Do you think I will have you here squiring of distressed dames, save as a priest? You shall hence to Madame of Montgomery as her faithful chaplain, once I have heard you preach and know your doctrine."

Leicester almost laughed outright in the young man's face now, for he had no thought that De la Forêt would accept, and refusal meant the exile's doom.

It seemed fantastic that this noble gentleman, this very type of the perfect soldier, with the brown face of a picaroon and an athletic valour of body, should become a preacher even in necessity.

Elizabeth, seeing De la Forêt's dumb amazement and anxiety, spoke up sharply: "Do this, or get you hence to the Medici, and Madame of Montgomery shall mourn her protector, and Mademoiselle your mistress of the vermilion cheek, shall have one lover the less; which, methinks, our Seigneur of Rozel would thank me for."

De la Forêt started, his lips pressed firmly together in effort of restraint. There seemed little the Queen did not know concerning him; and reference to Angèle roused him to sharp solicitude.

"Well, well?" asked Elizabeth impatiently, then

made a motion to Leicester, and he, going to the door, bade some one to enter.

There stepped inside the Seigneur of Rozel, who made a lumbering obeisance, then got to his knees before the Queen.

"You have brought the lady safely—with her father?" she asked.

Lemprière, puzzled, looked inquiringly at the Queen, then replied: "Both are safe without, your infinite Majesty."

De la Forêt's face grew pale. He knew now for the first time that Angèle and her father were in England, and he looked Lemprière suspiciously in the eyes; but the swaggering Seigneur met his look frankly, and bowed with ponderous and genial gravity.

Now De la Forêt spoke. "Your high Majesty," said he, "if I may ask Mademoiselle Aubert one question in your presence—"

"Your answer now; the lady in due season," interposed the Queen.

"She was betrothed to a soldier, she may resent a priest," said De la Forêt, with a touch of humour, for he saw the better way was to take the matter with some outward ease.

Elizabeth smiled. "It is the custom of her sex to have a fondness for both," she answered, with an acid smile. "But your answer?"

De la Forêt's face became exceeding grave. Bowing his head, he said: "My sword has spoken freely for the Cause; God forbid that my tongue should not speak also. I will do your Majesty's behest."

The jesting word that was upon the royal lips came not forth, for De la Forêt's face was that of a man who had determined a great thing, and Elizabeth was one

who had a heart for high deeds. "The man is brave indeed," she said under her breath, and, turning to the dumfounded Seigneur, bade him bring in Mademoiselle Aubert.

A moment later Angèle entered, came a few steps forward, made obeisance, and stood still. She showed no trepidation, but looked before her steadily. She knew not what was to be required of her, she was a stranger in a strange land; but persecution and exile had gone far to strengthen her spirit and greaten her composure.

Elizabeth gazed at the girl coldly and critically. To women she was not over-amiable; but as she looked at the young Huguenot maid, of this calm bearing, warm of colour, clear of eye, and purposeful of face, something kindled in her. Most like it was that love for a cause, which was more to be encouraged by her than any woman's love for a man, which as she grew older inspired her with aversion, as talk of marriage brought cynical allusions to her lips.

"I have your letter and its protests and its pleadings. There were fine words and adjurations—are you so religious, then?" she asked brusquely.

"I am a Huguenot, your noble Majesty," answered the girl, as though that answered all.

"How is it, then, you are betrothed to a roistering soldier?" asked the Queen.

"Some must pray for Christ's sake, and some must fight, your most christian Majesty," answered the girl.

"Some must do both," rejoined the Queen, in a kinder voice, for the pure spirit of the girl worked upon her. "I am told that Monsieur de la Forêt fights fairly. If he can pray as well, methinks he shall have safety in our kingdom, and ye shall all have peace. On Trinity

Sunday you shall preach in my chapel, Monsieur de la Forêt, and thereafter you shall know your fate."

She rose. "My Lord," she said to Leicester, on whose face gloom had settled, "you will tell the Lord Chamberlain that Monsieur de la Forêt's durance must be made comfortable in the west tower of my palace till chapel-going of Trinity Day. I will send him for his comfort and instruction some sermons of Latimer."

She stepped down from the dais. "You will come with me, mistress," she said to Angèle, and reached out her hand.

Angèle fell on her knees and kissed it, tears falling down her cheek, then rose and followed the Queen from the chamber. She greatly desired to look backward towards De la Forêt, but some good angel bade her not. She realised that to offend the Queen at this moment might ruin all; and Elizabeth herself was little like to offer chance for farewell and love-tokens.

So it was that, with bowed head, Angèle left the room with the Queen of England, leaving Lemprière and De la Forêt gazing at each other, the one bewildered, the other lost in painful reverie, and Leicester smiling maliciously at them both.

CHAPTER X

EVERY man, if you bring him to the right point, if you touch him in the corner where he is most sensitive, where he most lives, as it were; if you prick his nerves with a needle of suggestion where all his passions, ambitions and sentiments are at white heat, will readily throw away the whole game of life in some mad act out of harmony with all he ever did. It matters little whether the needle prick him by accident or blunder or design, he will burst all bounds, and establish again the old truth that each of us will prove himself a fool given perfect opportunity. Nor need the occasion of this revolution be a great one; the most trivial event may produce the great fire which burns up wisdom, prudence and habit.

The Earl of Leicester, so long counted astute, clear-headed, and well-governed, had been suddenly foisted out of balance, shaken from his imperious composure, tortured out of an assumed and persistent urbanity, by the presence in Greenwich Palace of a Huguenot exile of no seeming importance, save what the Medici grimly gave him by desiring his head. It appeared absurd that the great Leicester, whose nearness to the throne had made him the most feared, most notable, and, by virtue of his opportunities, the most dramatic figure in England, should have sleepless nights by reason of a fugitive like Michel de la Forêt. On the surface it was preposterous that he should see in the Queen's offer of service to the refugee evidence that she was set to grant him special favours; it was equally absurd that her offer

of safety to him on pledge of his turning preacher should seem proof that she meant to have him near her.

Elizabeth had left the presence-chamber without so much as a glance at him, though she had turned and looked graciously at the stranger. He had hastily followed her, and thereafter impatiently awaited a summons which never came, though he had sent a message that his hours were at her Majesty's disposal. Waiting, he saw Angèle's father escorted from the palace by a Gentleman Pensioner to a lodge in the park; he saw Michel de la Forêt taken to his apartments; he saw the Seigneur of Rozel walking in the palace grounds with such possession as though they were his own, self-content in every motion of his body.

Upon the instant the great Earl was incensed out of all proportion to the affront of the Seigneur's existence. He suddenly hated Lemprière only less than he hated Michel de la Forêt. As he still waited irritably for a summons from Elizabeth, he brooded on every word and every look she had given him of late; he recalled her manner to him in the ante-chapel the day before, and the admiring look she cast on De la Forêt but now. He had seen more in it than mere approval of courage and the self-reliant bearing of a refugee of her own religion.

These were days when the soldier of fortune mounted to high places. He needed but to carry the banner of bravery and a busy sword, and his way to power was not hindered by poor estate. To be gently born was the one thing needful, and Michel de la Forêt was gently born; and he had still his sword, though he chose not to use it in Elizabeth's service. My Lord knew it might be easier for a stranger like De la Forêt, who came with no encumbrance, to mount to place in the struggles of the Court, than for an Englishman, whose increasing

and ever-bolder enemies were undermining on every hand, to hold his own.

He began to think upon ways and means to meet this sudden preference of the Queen, made sharply manifest as he waited in the ante-chamber, by a summons to the refugee to enter the Queen's apartments. When the refugee came forth again he wore a sword the Queen had sent him, and a packet of Latimer's sermons were under his arm. Leicester was unaware that Elizabeth herself did not see De la Forêt when he was thus hastily called; but that her lady-in-waiting, the Duke's Daughter, who figured so largely in the pictures Lemprière drew of his experiences at Greenwich Palace, brought forth the sermons and the sword, with this message from the Queen:

"The Queen says that it is but fair to the sword to be by Michel de la Forêt's side when the sermons are in his hand, that his choice have every seeming of fairness. For her Majesty says it is still his choice between the Sword and the Book till Trinity Day."

Leicester, however, only saw the sword at the side of the refugee and the gold-bound book under his arm as he came forth, and in a rage he left the palace and gloomily walked under the trees, denying himself to every one.

To seize De la Forêt, and send him to the Medici, and then rely on Elizabeth's favour for his pardon, as he had done in the past? That might do, but the risk to England was too great. It would be like the Queen, if her temper was up, to demand from the Medici the return of De la Forêt, and war might ensue. Two women, with two nations behind them, were not to be played lightly against each other, trusting to their common sense and humour.

As he walked among the trees, brooding with averted eyes, he was suddenly faced by the Seigneur of Rozel, who also was shaken from his discretion and the best interests of the two fugitives he was bound to protect, by a late offence against his own dignity. A seed of rancour had been sown in his mind which had grown to a great size and must presently burst into a dark flower of vengeance. He, Lemprière of Rozel, with three dove-cotes, the *perquage*, and the office of butler to the Queen, to be called a "farmer," to be sneered at—it was not in the blood of man, not in the towering vanity of a Lemprière, to endure it at any price computable to mortal mind.

Thus there were in England on that day two fools (there are as many now), and one said:

"My Lord Leicester, I crave a word with you."

"Crave on, good fellow," responded Leicester with a look of boredom, making to pass by.

"I am Lemprière, lord of Rozel, my lord—"

"Ah yes, I took you for a farmer," answered Leicester. "Instead of that, I believe you keep doves, and wear a jerkin that fits like a king's. Dear Lord, so does greatness come with girth!"

"The King that gave me dove-cotes gave me honour, and 'tis not for the Earl of Leicester to belittle it."

"What is your coat of arms?" said Leicester with a faint smile, but in an assumed tone of natural interest.

"A swan upon a sea of azure, two stars above, and over all a sword with a wreath around its point," answered Lemprière simply, unsuspecting irony, and touched by Leicester's flint where he was most like to flare up with vanity.

"Ah!" said Leicester. "And the motto?"

"*Mea spes supra stella*—my hope is beyond the stars."

"And the wreath—of parsley, I suppose?"

Now Lemprière understood, and he shook with fury as he roared:

"Yes, by God, and to be got at the point of the sword, to put on the heads of insolents like Lord Leicester!" His face was flaming, he was like a cock strutting upon a stable mound.

There fell a slight pause, and then Leicester said: "To-morrow at daylight, eh?"

"Now, my lord, now!"

"We have no seconds."

"'Sblood! 'Tis not your way, my lord, to be stickling in detail of courtesy."

"'Tis not the custom to draw swords in secret, Lemprière of Rozel. Also my teeth are not on edge to fight you."

Lemprière had already drawn his sword, and the look of his eyes was as that of a mad bull in a ring. "You won't fight with me—you don't think Rozel your equal?" His voice was high.

Leicester's face took on a hard, cruel look. "We cannot fight among the ladies," he said quietly.

Lemprière followed his glance, and saw the Duke's Daughter and another in the trees near by.

He hastily put up his sword. "When, my lord?" he asked.

"You will hear from me to-night," was the answer, and Leicester went forward hastily to meet the ladies—they had news no doubt.

Lemprière turned on his heel and walked quickly away among the trees towards the quarters where Buonespoir was in durance, which was little more severe than to keep him within the palace yard. There he found the fool and the pirate in whimsical converse.

The fool had brought a letter of inquiry and warm greeting from Angèle to Buonespoir, who was laboriously inditing one in return. When Lemprière entered the pirate greeted him jovially.

"In the very pinch of time you come," he said. "You have grammar and syntax and etiquette."

"'Tis even so, Nuncio," said the fool. "Here is needed prosody potential. Exhale!"

The three put their heads together above the paper.

CHAPTER XI

"I WOULD know your story. How came you and yours to this pass? Where were you born? Of what degree are you? And this Michel de la Forêt, when came he to your feet—or you to his arms? I would know all. Begin where life began; end where you sit here at the feet of Elizabeth. This other cushion to your knees. There—now speak. We are alone."

Elizabeth pushed a velvet cushion towards Angèle, where she half-knelt, half-sat on the rush-strewn floor of the great chamber. The warm light of the afternoon sun glowed through the thick-tinted glass high up, and, in the gleam, the heavy tapestries sent by an archduke, once suitor for Elizabeth's hand, emerged with dramatic distinctness, and peopled the room with silent watchers of the great Queen and the nobly-born but poor and fugitive Huguenot. A splendid piece of sculpture—Eleanor, wife of Edward—given Elizabeth by another royal suitor, who had sought to be her consort through many years, caught the warm bath of gold and crimson from the clerestory and seemed alive and breathing. Against the pedestal the Queen had placed her visitor, the red cushions making vivid contrast to her white gown and black hair. In the half-kneeling, half-sitting posture, with her hands clasped before her, so to steady herself to composure, Angèle looked a suppliant—and a saint. Her pure, straightforward gaze, her smooth, urbane forehead, the guilelessness that spoke in every feature, were not made worldly by the intelligence and humour reposing in the brown depths of her eyes. Not a line vexed her face or forehead. Her countenance

was of a singular and almost polished smoothness, and though her gown was severely simple by comparison with silks and velvets, furs and ruffles of a gorgeous Court at its most gorgeous period, yet in it here and there were touches of exquisite fineness. The black velvet ribbon slashing her sleeves, the slight cloud-like gathering of lace at the back of her head, gave a distinguished softness to her appearance.

She was in curious contrast to the Queen, who sat upon heaped-up cushions, her rich buff and black gown a blaze of jewels, her yellow hair, now streaked with grey, roped with pearls, her hands heavy with rings, her face past its youth, past its hopefulness, however noble and impressive, past its vivid beauty. Her eyes wore ever a determined look, were persistent and vigilant, with a lurking trouble, yet flooded, too, by a quiet melancholy, like a low, insistent note that floats through an opera of passion, romance, and tragedy; like a tone of pathos giving deep character to some splendid pageant, which praises whilst it commemorates, proclaiming conquest while the grass has not yet grown on quiet houses of the children of the sword who no more wield the sword. Evasive, cautious, secretive, creator of her own policy, she had sacrificed her womanhood to the power she held and the State she served. Vain, passionate, and faithful, her heart all England and Elizabeth, the hunger for glimpses of what she had never known, and was never to know, thrust itself into her famished life; and she was wont to indulge, as now, in fancies and follow some emotional whim with a determination very like to eccentricity.

That, at this time, when great national events were forward, when conspiracies abounded, when Parliament was grimly gathering strength to compel her to

marry; and her Council were as sternly pursuing their policy for the destruction of Leicester; while that very day had come news of a rising in the North and of fresh Popish plots hatched in France—that in such case, this day she should set aside all business, refuse ambassadors and envoys admission, and occupy herself with two Huguenot refugees seemed incredible to the younger courtiers. To such as Cecil, however, there was clear understanding. He knew that when she seemed most inert, most impassive to turbulent occurrences, most careless of consequences, she was but waiting till, in her own mind, her plans were grown; so that she should see her end clearly ere she spoke or moved. Now, as the great minister showed himself at the door of the chamber and saw Elizabeth seated with Angèle, he drew back instinctively, expectant of the upraised hand which told him he must wait. And, in truth, he was nothing loth to do so, for his news he cared little to deliver, important though it was that she should have it promptly and act upon it soon. He turned away with a feeling of relief, however, for this gossip with the Huguenot maid would no doubt interest her, give new direction to her warm sympathies, which if roused in one thing were ever more easily roused in others. He knew that a crisis was nearing in the royal relations with Leicester. In a life of devotion to her service he had seen her before in this strange mood, and he could feel that she was ready for an outburst. As he thought of De la Forêt and the favour with which she had looked at him he smiled grimly, for if it meant aught it meant that it would drive Leicester to some act which would hasten his own doom; though, indeed, it might also make another path more difficult for himself, for the Parliament, for the people.

Little as Elizabeth could endure tales of love and news of marriage; little as she believed in any vows, save those made to herself; little as she was inclined to adjust the rough courses of true love, she was the surgeon to this particular business, and she had the surgeon's love of laying bare even to her own cynicism the hurt of the poor patient under her knife. Indeed, so had Angèle impressed her that for once she thought she might hear the truth. Because she saw the awe in the other's face and a worshipping admiration of the great protectress of Protestantism, who had by large gifts of men and money in times past helped the Cause, she looked upon her here with kindness.

"Speak now, mistress fugitive, and I will listen," she added, as Cecil withdrew; and she made a motion to musicians in a distant gallery.

Angèle's heart fluttered to her mouth, but the soft, simple music helped her, and she began with eyes bent upon the ground, her linked fingers clasping and unclasping slowly.

"I was born at Rouen, your high Majesty," she said. "My mother was a cousin of the Prince of Passy, the great Protestant—"

"Of Passy—ah!" said Elizabeth amazed. "Then you are Protestants indeed; and your face is no invention, but cometh honestly. No, no, 'tis no accident—God rest his soul, great Passy!"

"She died—my mother—when I was a little child. I can but just remember her—so brightly quiet, so quick, so beautiful. In Rouen life had little motion; but now and then came stir and turmoil, for war sent its message into the old streets, and our captains and our peasants poured forth to fight for the King. Once came the King and Queen—Francis and Mary—"

Elizabeth drew herself upright with an exclamation.

"Ah, you have seen her—Mary of Scots," she said sharply. "You have seen her?"

"As near as I might touch her with my hand, as near as is your high Majesty. She spoke to me—my mother's father was in her train; as yet we had not become Huguenots, nor did we know her Majesty as now the world knows. They came, the King and Queen—and that was the beginning."

She paused, and looked shyly at Elizabeth, as though she found it hard to tell her story.

"And the beginning, it was—?" said Elizabeth, impatient and intent.

"We went to Court. The Queen called my mother into her train. But it was in no wise for our good. At Court my mother pined away—and so she died in durance."

"Wherefore in durance?"

"To what she saw she would not shut her eyes; to what she heard she would not close her soul; what was required of her she would not do."

"She would not obey the Queen?"

"She could not obey those whom the Queen favoured. Then the tyranny that broke her heart—"

The Queen interrupted her.

"In very truth, but 'tis not in France alone that Queen's favourites grasp the sceptre and speak the word. Hath a Queen a thousand eyes—can she know truth where most dissemble?"

"There was a man—he could not know there was one true woman there, who for her daughter's sake, for her desired advancement, and because she was cousin of Passy, who urged it, lived that starved life; this man, this prince, drew round her feet snares, set pit-falls for

her while my father was sent upon a mission. Steadfast she kept her soul unspotted; but it wore away her life. The Queen would not permit return to Rouen—who can tell what tale was told her by one whom she foiled? And so she stayed. In this slow, savage persecution, when she was like a bird that, thinking it is free, flieth against the window-pane and falleth back beaten, so did she stay, and none could save her. To cry out, to throw herself upon the spears, would have been ruin of herself, her husband and her child; and for these she lived."

Elizabeth's eyes had kindled. Perhaps never in her life had the life at Court been so exposed to her. The simple words, meant but to convey the story, and with no thought behind, had thrown a light on her own Court, on her own position. Adept in weaving a sinuous course in her policy, in making mazes for others to tread, the mazes which they in turn prepared had never before been traced beneath her eyes to the same vivid and ultimate effect.

"Help me, ye saints, but things are not at such a pass in this place!" she said abruptly, but with weariness in her voice. "Yet sometimes I know not. The Court is a city by itself, walled and moated, and hath a life all its own. '*If there be found ten honest men within the city yet will I save it*,' saith the Lord. By my father's head, I would not risk a finger on the hazard if this city, this Court of Elizabeth were set 'twixt the fire from Heaven and eternal peace. In truth, child, I would lay me down and die in black disgust were it not that one might come hereafter would make a very Sodom or Gomorrah of this land: and out yonder—out in all my counties, where the truth of England is among my poor burgesses, who die for the great causes which my nobles profess but

risk not their lives—out yonder all that they have won, and for which I have striven, would be lost. . . . Speak on. I have not heard so plain a tongue and so little guile these twenty years."

Angèle continued, more courage in her voice. "In the midst of it all came the wave of the new faith upon my mother. And before ill could fall upon her from her foes, she died and was at rest. Then we returned to Rouen, my father and I, and there we lived in peril, but in great happiness of soul until the day of massacre. That night in Paris we were given greatly of the mercy of God."

"You were there—you were in the massacre at Paris?"

"In the house of the Duke of Lançon, with whom was resting after a hazardous enterprise, Michel de la Forêt."

"And here beginneth the second lesson," said the Queen with a smile on her lips; but there was a look of scrutiny in her eyes, and something like irony in her tone. "And I will swear by all the stars of Heaven that this Michel saved ye both. Is it not so?"

"It is even so. By his skill and bravery we found our way to safety, and in a hiding-place near to our loved Rouen watched him return from the gates of death."

"He was wounded then?"

"Seven times wounded, and with as little blood left in him as would fill a cup. But it was summer, and we were in the hills, and they brought us, our friends of Rouen, all that we had need of; and so God was with us."

"But did he save thy life, except by skill, by indirect and fortunate wisdom? Was there deadly danger upon thee? Did he beat down the sword of death?"

"He saved my life thrice directly. The wounds he

carried were got by interposing his own sword 'twixt death and me."

"And that hath need of recompense?"

"My life was little worth the wounds he suffered; but I waited not until he saved it to owe it unto him. All that it is was his before he drew the sword."

"And 'tis this ye would call love betwixt ye—sweet givings and takings of looks, and soft sayings, and unchangeable and devouring faith. Is't this—and is this all?"

The girl had spoken out of an innocent heart, but the challenge in the Queen's voice worked upon her, and though she shrank a little, the fulness of her soul welled up and strengthened her. She spoke again, and now in her need and in her will to save the man she loved, by making this majesty of England his protector, her words had eloquence.

"It is not all, noble Queen. Love is more than that. It is the waking in the poorest minds, in the most barren souls, of something greater than themselves—as a chemist should find a substance that would give all other things by touching of them a new and higher value; as light and sun draw from the earth the tendrils of the seed that else had lain unproducing. 'Tis not alone soft words and touch of hand or lip. This caring wholly for one outside one's self kills that self which else would make the world blind and deaf and dumb. None hath loved greatly but hath helped to love in others. Ah, most sweet Majesty, for great souls like thine, souls born great, this medicine is not needful, for already hath the love of a nation inspired and enlarged it; but for souls like mine and of so many, none better and none worse than me, to love one other soul deeply and abidingly lifts us higher than ourselves. Your Majesty

hath been loved by a whole people, by princes and great men in a different sort—is it not the world's talk that none that ever reigned hath drawn such slavery of princes, and of great nobles who have courted death for hopeless love of one beyond their star? And is it not written in the world's book also that the Queen of England hath loved no man, but hath poured out her heart to a people; and hath served great causes in all the earth because of that love which hath still enlarged her soul, dowered at birth beyond reckoning?" Tears filled her eyes. "Ah, your supreme Majesty, to you whose heart is universal, the love of one poor mortal seemeth a small thing, but to those of little consequence it is the cable by which they unsteadily hold over the chasm 'twixt life and immortality. To thee, oh greatest monarch of the world, it is a staff on which thou need'st not lean, which thou hast never grasped; to me it is my all; without it I fail and fall and die."

She had spoken as she felt, yet, because she was a woman and guessed the mind of another woman, she had touched Elizabeth where her armour was weakest. She had suggested that the Queen had been the object of adoration, but had never given her heart to any man; that hers was the virgin heart and life; and that she had never stooped to conquer. Without realising it, and only dimly moving with that end in view, she had whetted Elizabeth's vanity. She had indeed soothed a pride wounded of late beyond endurance, suspecting, as she did, that Leicester had played his long part for his own sordid purposes, that his devotion was more alloy than precious metal. No note of praise could be pitched too high for Elizabeth, and if only policy did not intervene, if but no political advantage was lost by saving De la Forêt, that safety seemed now secure.

"You tell a tale and adorn it with good grace," she said, and held out her hand. Angèle kissed it. "And you have said to Elizabeth what none else dared to say since I was Queen here. He who hath never seen the lightning hath no dread of it. I had not thought there was in the world so much artlessness, with all the power of perfect art. But we live to be wiser. Thou shalt continue in thy tale. Thou hast seen Mary, once Queen of France, now Queen of Scots—answer me fairly; without if, or though, or any sort of doubt, the questions I shall put. Which of us twain, this ruin-starred queen or I, is of higher stature?"

"She hath advantage in little of your Majesty," bravely answered Angèle.

"Then," answered Elizabeth sourly, "she is too high, for I myself am neither too high nor too low. . . . And of complexion, which is the fairer?"

"Her complexion is the fairer, but your Majesty's countenance hath truer beauty, and sweeter majesty."

Elizabeth frowned slightly, then said:

"What exercises did she take when you were at the Court?"

"Sometimes she hunted, your Majesty, and sometimes she played upon the virginals."

"Did she play to effect?"

"Reasonably, your noble Majesty."

"You shall hear me play, and then speak truth upon us, for I have known none with so true a tongue since my father died."

Thereon she called to a lady who waited near in a little room to bring an instrument; but at that moment Cecil appeared again at the door, and his face seeming to show anxiety, Elizabeth, with a sigh, beckoned him to enter.

"Your face, Cecil, is as long as a Lenten collect. What raven croaks in England on May Day eve?"

Cecil knelt before her, and gave into her hand a paper.

"What record runs here?" she asked querulously.

"A prayer of your faithful Lords and Commons that your Majesty will grant speech with their chosen deputies to lay before your Majesty a cause they have at heart."

"Touching of—?" darkly asked the Queen.

"The deputies wait even now—will not your Majesty receive them? They have come humbly, and will go hence as humbly on the instant, if the hour is ill chosen."

Immediately Elizabeth's humour changed. A look of passion swept across her face, but her eyes lighted, and her lips smiled proudly. She avoided troubles by every means, fought off by subtleties the issues which she must meet; but when the inevitable hour came none knew so well to meet it as though it were a dearest friend, no matter what the danger, how great the stake.

"They are here at my door, these good servants of the State—shall they be kept dangling?" she said loudly. "Though it were time for prayers and God's mercy yet should they speak with me, have my counsel, or my hand upon the sacred parchment of the State. Bring them hither, Cecil. Now we shall see— Now you shall see, Angèle of Rouen, now you shall see how queens shall have no hearts to call their own, but be head and heart and soul and body at the will of every churl who thinks he serves the State and knows the will of Heaven. Stand here at my left hand. Mark the players and the play."

Kneeling, the deputies presented a resolution from the Lords and Commons that the Queen should, without more delay, in keeping with her oft-expressed resolve and the promise of her Council, appoint one who should succeed to the throne in case of her death "without posterity." Her faithful people pleaded with her gracious Majesty to forego unwillingness to marry and seek a consort worthy of her supreme consideration, to be raised to a place beside her near that throne which she had made the greatest in the world.

Gravely, solemnly, the chief members of the Lords and Commons spoke, and with as weighty pauses and devoted protestations as though this were the first time their plea had been urged, this obvious duty had been set out before her. Long ago in the flush and pride of her extreme youth and the full assurance of the fruits of marriage, they had spoken with the same sober responsibility; and though her youth had gone and the old certainty had for ever disappeared, they spoke of her marriage and its consequences as though it were still that far-off yesterday. Well for them that they did so, for though time had flown and royal suitors without number had become figures dim in the people's mind, Elizabeth, fed upon adulation, invoked, admired, besieged by young courtiers, flattered by maids who praised her beauty, had never seen the hands of the clock pass high noon, and still remained under the dearest and saddest illusion which can rest in a woman's mind. Long after the hands of life's clock had moved into afternoon, the ancient prayer was still gravely presented that she should marry and give an heir to England's crown; and she as solemnly listened and dropped her eyes, and strove to hide her virgin modesty behind a high demeanour which must needs sink self in royal duty.

"These be the dear desires of your supreme Majesty's faithful Lords and Commons and the people of the shires whose wills they represent. Your Majesty's life, God grant it last beyond that of the youngest of your people so greatly blessed in your rule! But accidents of time be many; and while the world is full of guile, none can tell what peril may beset the crown, if your Majesty's wisdom sets not apart, gives not to her country, one whom the nation can surround with its care, encompass lovingly by its duty."

The talk with Angèle had had a curious influence upon the Queen. It was plain that now she was moved by real feeling, and that, though she deceived herself, or pretended so to do, shutting her eyes to sober facts, and dreaming old dreams—as it were, in a world where never was a mirror nor a timepiece—yet there was working in her a fresher spirit, urging her to a fairer course than she had shaped for many a day.

"My lords and gentlemen and my beloved subjects," she answered presently, and for an instant set her eyes upon Angèle, then turned to them again, "I pray you stand and hear me. . . . Ye have spoken fair words to my face, and of my face, and of the person of this daughter of great Henry, from whom I got whatever grace or manner or favour is to me; and by all your reasoning you do flatter the heart of the Queen of England, whose mind indeed sleeps not in deed or desire for this realm. Ye have drawn a fair picture of this mortal me, and though from the grace of the picture the colours may fade by time, may give by weather, may be spoiled by chance, yet my loyal mind, nor time with her swift wings shall overtake, nor the misty clouds may darken, nor chance with her slippery foot may overthrow. It sets its course by the

heart of England, and when it passeth there shall be found that one shall be left behind who shall be surety of all that hath been lying in the dim warehouse of fate for England's high future. Be sure that in this thing I have entered into the weigh-house, and I hold the balance, and ye shall be well satisfied. Ye have been fruitful in counsel, ye have been long knitting a knot never tied, ye shall have comfort soon. But know ye beyond peradventure that I have bided my time with good reason. If our loom be framed with rotten hurdles, when our web is wellny done, our work is yet to begin. Against mischance and dark discoveries my mind, with knowledge hidden from you, hath been firmly arrayèd. If it be in your thought that I am set against a marriage which shall serve the nation, purge yourselves, friends, of that sort of heresy, for the belief is awry. Though I think that to be one and always one, neither mated nor mothering, be good for a private woman, for a prince it is not meet. Therefore, say to my Lords and Commons that I am more concerned for what shall chance to England when I am gone than to linger out my living thread. I hope, my lords and gentlemen, to die with a good *Nunc Dimittis*, which could not be if I did not give surety for the nation after my graved bones. Ye shall hear soon—ye shall hear and be satisfied, and so I give you to the care of Almighty God."

Once more they knelt, and then slowly withdrew, with faces downcast and troubled. They had secret knowledge which she did not yet possess, but which at any moment she must know, and her ambiguous speech carried no conviction to their minds. Yet their conference with her was most opportune, for the news she must presently receive, brought by a messenger

from Scotland who had outstripped all others, would no doubt move her to action which should set the minds of the people at rest, and go far to stem the tide of conspiracy flowing through the kingdom.

Elizabeth stood watching them, and remained gazing after they had disappeared; then rousing herself, she turned to leave the room, and beckoned to Angèle to follow.

CHAPTER XII

As twilight was giving place to night Angèle was roused from the reverie into which she had fallen, by the Duke's Daughter, who whispered to her that if she would have a pleasure given to but few, she would come quickly. Taking her hand the Duke's Daughter —as true and whimsical a spirit as ever lived in troubled days and under the ægis of the sword—led her swiftly to the Queen's chamber. They did not enter, but waited in a quiet gallery.

"The Queen is playing upon the virginals, and she playeth best when alone; so stand you here by this tapestry, and you shall have pleasure beyond payment," said the Duke's Daughter.

Angèle had no thought that the Queen of her vanity had commanded that she be placed there as though secretly, and she listened dutifully at first; but presently her ears were ravished; and even the Duke's Daughter showed some surprise, for never had she heard the Queen play with such grace and feeling. The countenance of the musician was towards them, and at last, as though by accident, Elizabeth looked up and saw the face of her lady.

"Spy, spy," she cried. "Come hither—come hither, all of you!"

When they had descended and knelt to her, she made as if she would punish the Duke's Daughter by striking her with a scarf that lay at her hand, but to Angèle she said:

"How think you then, hath that other greater skill —Darnley's wife I mean?"

"Not she or any other hath so delighted me," said Angèle, with worship in her eyes—so doth talent given to majesty become lifted beyond its measure.

The Queen's eyes lighted. "We shall have dancing, then," she said. "The dance hath charms for me. We shall not deny our youth. The heart shall keep as young as the body."

An instant later the room was full of dancers, and Elizabeth gave her hand to Leicester, who bent every faculty to pleasing her. His face had darkened as he had seen Angèle beside her, but the Queen's graciousness, whether assumed or real, had returned, and her face carried a look of triumph and spirit and delight. Again and again she glanced towards Angèle, and what she saw evidently gave her pleasure, for she laughed and disported herself with grace and an agreeable temper, and Leicester lent himself to her spirit with adroit wit and humility. He had seen his mistake of the morning, and was now intent to restore himself to favour.

He succeeded well, for the emotions roused in Elizabeth during the day, now heightened by vanity and emulation, found in him a centre upon which they could converge; and, in her mind, Angèle, for the nonce, was disassociated from any thought of De la Forêt. Leicester's undoubted gifts were well and cautiously directed, and his talent of assumed passion—his heart was facile, and his gallantry knew no bounds—was put to dexterous use, convincing for the moment. The Queen seemed all complaisance again. Presently she had Angèle brought to her.

"How doth her dance compare—she who hath wedded Darnley?"

"She danceth not so high nor disposedly, with no such joyous lightness as your high Majesty, but yet she moveth with circumspection."

"Circumspection—circumspection, that is no gift in dancing, which should be wilful yet airily composed, thoughtless yet inducing. Circumspection!—in nothing else hath Mary shown it where she should. 'Tis like this Queen perversely to make a psalm of dancing, and then pirouette with sacred duty. But you have spoken the truth, and I am well content. So get you to your rest."

She tapped Angèle's cheek. "You shall remain here to-night. 'Tis too late for you to be sent abroad."

She was about to dismiss her, when there was a sudden stir. Cecil had entered and was making his way to the Queen, followed by two strangers. Elizabeth waited their approach.

"Your gracious Majesty," said Cecil, in a voice none heard save Elizabeth, for all had fallen back at a wave of her hand, "the Queen of Scots is the mother of a fair son."

Elizabeth's face flushed, then became pale, and she struck her knee with her clinched hand. "Who bringeth the news?" she inquired in a sharp voice.

"Sir Andrew Melvill here."

"Who is with him yonder?"

"One who hath been attached to the Queen of Scots."

"He hath the ill look of such an one," she answered, and then said below her breath bitterly: "She hath a son—and I am but a barren stock."

Rising, she added hurriedly: "We will speak to the people at the May Day sports to-morrow. Let there be great feasting."

She motioned to Sir Andrew Melvill to come forward,

and with a gesture of welcome and a promise of speech with him on the morrow she dismissed them.

Since the two strangers had entered, Angèle's eyes had been fastened on the gentleman who accompanied Sir Andrew Melvill. Her first glance at him had sent a chill through her, and she remained confused and disturbed. In vain her memory strove to find where the man was set in her past. The time, the place, the event eluded her, but a sense of foreboding possessed her; and her eyes followed him with strained anxiety as he retired from the presence.

CHAPTER XIII

As had been arranged when Lemprière challenged Leicester, they met soon after dawn among the trees beside the Thames. A gentleman of the court, to whom the Duke's Daughter had previously presented Lemprière, gaily agreed to act as second, and gallantly attended the lord of Rozel in his adventurous enterprise. There were few at Court who had not some grudge against Leicester, few who would not willingly have done duty at such a time; for Leicester's friends were of fair-weather sort, ready to defend him, to support him, not for friendship but for the crumbs that dropped from the table of his power. The favourite himself was attended by the Earl of Ealing, a youngster who had his spurs to win, who thought it policy to serve the great time-server. Two others also came.

It was a morning little made for deeds of rancour or of blood. As they passed, the early morning mists above the green fields of Kent and Essex were being melted by the summer sun. The smell of ripening fruit came on them with pungent sweetness, their feet crashed odorously through clumps of tiger-lilies, and the dew on the ribbon-grass shook glistening drops upon their velvets. Overhead the carolling of the thrush came swimming recklessly through the trees, and far over in the fields the ploughmen started upon the heavy courses of their labour; while here and there poachers with bows and arrows slid through the green undergrowth, like spies hovering on an army's flank.

To Lemprière the morning carried no impression save that life was well worth living. No agitation passed across his nerves, no apprehension reached his mind. He had no imagination; he loved the things that his eyes saw because they filled him with enjoyment; but why they were, or whence they came, or what they meant or boded, never gave him meditation. A vast epicurean, a consummate egotist, ripe with feeling and rich with energy, he could not believe that when he spoke the heavens would not fall. The stinging sweetness of the morning was a tonic to all his energies, an elation to his mind; he swaggered through the lush grasses and boskage as though marching to a marriage.

Leicester, on his part, no more caught at the meaning of the morning, at the long whisper of enlivened nature, than did his foe. The day gave to him no more than was his right. If the day was not fine, then Leicester was injured; but if the day was fine, then Leicester had his due. Moral blindness made him blind for the million deep teachings trembling round him. He felt only the garish and the splendid. So it was that at Kenilworth, where his Queen had visited him, the *fêtes* that he had held would far outshine the *fête* which would take place in Greenwich Park on this May Day. The *fête* of this May Day would take place, but would he see it? The thought flashed through his mind that he might not; but he trod it under foot; not through an inborn, primitive egotism like that of Lemprière, but through an innate arrogance, an unalterable belief that Fate was ever on his side. He had played so many tricks with Fate, had mocked while taking its gifts so often, that, like the son who has flouted his indulgent father through innumerable times, he conceived that he should never be disinherited. It irked him that he

should be fighting with a farmer, as he termed the Seigneur of the Jersey Isle; but there was in the event, too, a sense of relief, for he had a will for murder. Yesterday's events were still fresh in his mind; and he had a feeling that the letting of Lemprière's blood would cool his own and be some cure for the choler which the presence of these strangers at the Court had wrought in him.

There were better swordsmen in England than he, but his skill was various, and he knew tricks of the trade which this primitive Norman could never have learnt. He had some touch of wit, some biting observation, and, as he neared the place of the encounter, he played upon the coming event with a mordant frivolity. Not by nature a brave man, he was so much a fatalist, such a worshipper of his star, that he had acquired an artificial courage which had served him well. The unschooled gentlemen with him roared with laughter at his sallies, and they came to the place of meeting as though to a summer feast.

"Good-morrow, nobility," said Leicester with courtesy overdone, and bowing much too low.

"Good-morrow, valentine," answered Lemprière, flushing slightly at the disguised insult, and rising to the moment.

"I hear the crop of fools is short this year in Jersey, and through no fault of yours—you've done your best most loyally," jeered Leicester, as he doffed his doublet, his gentlemen laughing in derision.

"'Tis true enough, my lord, and I have come to find new seed in England, where are fools to spare; as I trust in Heaven one shall be spared on this very day for planting yonder."

He was eaten with rage, but he was cool and steady.

He was now in his linen and small clothes and looked like some untrained Hercules.

"Well said, nobility," laughed Leicester with an ugly look. "'Tis seed time—let us measure out the seed. On guard!"

Never were two men such opposites, never two so seemingly ill-matched. Leicester's dark face and its sardonic look, his lithe figure, the nervous strength of his bearing, were in strong contrast to the bulking breadth, the perspiring robustness of Lemprière of Rozel. It was not easy of belief that Lemprière should be set to fight this toreador of a fighting Court. But there they stood, Lemprière's face with a great-eyed gravity looming above his rotund figure like a moon above a purple cloud. But huge and loose though the Seigneur's motions seemed, he was as intent as though there were but two beings in the universe, Leicester and himself. A strange alertness seemed to be upon him, and, as Leicester found when the swords crossed, he was quicker than his bulk gave warrant. His perfect health made his vision sure; and, though not a fine swordsman, he had done much fighting in his time, had been ever ready for the touch of steel; and had served some warlike days in fighting France, where fate had well befriended him. That which Leicester meant should be by-play of a moment became a full half-hour's desperate game. Leicester found that the thrust—the fatal thrust learned from an Italian master—he meant to give, was met by a swift precision, responding to quick vision. Again and again he would have brought the end, but Lemprière heavily foiled him. The wound which the Seigneur got at last, meant to be mortal, was saved from that by the facility of a quick apprehension.

Indeed, for a time the issue had seemed doubtful, for

the endurance and persistence of the Seigneur made for exasperation and recklessness in his antagonist, and once blood was drawn from the wrist of the great man; but at length Lemprière went upon the aggressive. Here he erred, for Leicester found the chance for which he had manœuvred—to use the feint and thrust got out of Italy. He brought his enemy low, but only after a duel the like of which had never been seen at the Court of England. The toreador had slain his bull at last, but had done no justice to his reputation. Never did man more gallantly sustain his honour with heaviest odds against him than did the Seigneur of Rozel that day.

As he was carried away by the merry gentlemen of the Court, he called back to the favourite:

"Leicester is not so great a swordsman after all. Hang fast to your honours by the skin of your teeth, my lord."

CHAPTER XIV

It was Monday, and the eyes of London and the Court were turned towards Greenwich Park, where the Queen was to give entertainment to the French Envoy who had come once more to urge upon the Queen marriage with a son of the Medici, and to obtain an assurance that she would return to France the widow of the great Montgomery and his valiant lieutenant, Michel de la Forêt. The river was covered with boats and barges, festooned, canopied, and hung with banners and devices; and from sunrise music and singing conducted down the stream the gaily dressed populace—for those were the days when a man spent on his ruff and his hose and his russet coat as much as would feed and house a family for a year; when the fine-figured ruffler with sables about his neck, corked slipper, trimmed buskin, and cloak of silk or damask furred, carried his all upon his back.

Loud-voiced gallants came floating by; men of a hundred guilds bearing devices pompously held on their way to the great pageant; country bumpkins up from Surrey roystered and swore that there was but one land that God had blessed, and challenged the grinning watermen from Gravesend and Hampton Court to deny it; and the sun with ardour drove from the sky every invading cloud, leaving Essex and Kent as far as eye could see perfect green gardens of opulence.

Before Elizabeth had left her bed, London had emptied itself into Greenwich Park. Thither the London Companies had come in their varied dazzling accoutre-

ments—hundreds armed in fine corselets bearing the long Moorish pike; tall halberdiers in the unique armour called Almainrivets, and gunners or muleteers equipped in shirts of mail with morions or steel caps. Here too were to come the Gentlemen Pensioners, resplendent in scarlet, to "run with the spear;" and hundreds of men-at-arms were set at every point to give garish bravery to all. Thousands of citizens, open-mouthed, gazed down the long arenas of green festooned with every sort of decoration and picturesque invention. Cages of large birds from the Indies, fruits, corn, fishes, grapes, hung in the trees, players perched in the branches discoursed sweet music, and poets recited their verses from rustic bridges or on platforms with weapons and armour hung trophy-wise on ragged staves. Upon a small lake a dolphin four-and-twenty feet in length came swimming, within its belly a lively orchestra; Italian tumblers swung from rope to bar; and crowds gathered at the places where bear and bull-baiting were to excite the none too fastidious tastes of the time.

All morning the gay delights went on, and at high noon the cry was carried from mouth to mouth: "The Queen! The Queen!"

She appeared on a balcony surrounded by her lords and ladies, and there received the diplomatists, speaking at length to the French Envoy in a tone of lightness and elusive cheerfulness which he was at a loss to understand and tried in vain to pierce by cogent remarks bearing on matters of moment involved in his embassage. Not far away stood Leicester, but the Queen had done no more than note his presence by a glance, and now and again with ostentatious emphasis she spoke to Angèle, whom she had had brought to her in the morning before chapel-going. Thus early, after

a few questions and some scrutiny, she had sent her in charge of a gentleman-at-arms and a maid of the Duke's Daughter to her father's lodging, with orders to change her robe, to return to the palace in good time before noon, and to bring her father to a safe place where he could watch the pleasures of the people. When Angèle came to the presence again she saw that the Queen was wearing a gown of pure white with the sleeves shot with black, such as she herself had worn when admitted to audience yesterday. Vexed, agitated, embittered as Elizabeth had been by the news brought to her the night before, she had kept her wardrobers and seamstresses at work the whole night to alter a white satin habit to the simplicity and style of that which Angèle had worn.

"What think you of my gown, my lady refugee?" she said to Angèle at last, as the Gentlemen Pensioners paraded in the space below, followed by the Knights Tilters—at their head the Queen's Champion, Sir Henry Lee: twenty-five of the most gallant and favoured of the courtiers of Elizabeth, including the gravest of her counsellors and the youngest gallant who had won her smile, Master Christopher Hatton. Some of these brave suitors, taken from the noblest families, had appeared in the tilt-yard every anniversary of the year of her accession, and had lifted their romantic office, which seemed but the service of enamoured knights, into an almost solemn dignity.

The vast crowd disposed itself around the great improvised yard where the Knights Tilters were to engage, and the Queen, followed by her retinue, descended to the dais which had been set up near the palace. Her white satin gown, roped with pearls only at the neck and breast, glistened in the bright sun, and her fair hair

took on a burnished radiance. As Angèle passed with her in the gorgeous procession, she could not but view the scene with admiring eye, albeit her own sweet sober attire, a pearly grey, seemed little in keeping; for the ladies and lords were most richly attired, and the damask and satin cloaks, crimson velvet gowns, silk hoods, and jewelled swords and daggers made a brave show. She was like some moth in a whorl of butterflies.

Her face was pale, and her eye had a curious disturbed look, as though they had seen frightening things. The events of last evening had tried her simple spirit, and she shrank from this glittering show; but the knowledge that her lover's life was in danger, and that her happiness was here and now at stake, held her bravely to her place, beset as it was with peril; for the Queen, with that eccentricity which had lifted her up yesterday, might cast her down to-day, and she had good reason to fear the power and influence of Leicester, whom she knew with a sure instinct was intent on Michel's ruin. Behind all her nervous shrinking and her heart's doubt, the memory of the face of the stranger she had seen last night with Sir Andrew Melvill tortured her. She could not find the time and place where she had seen the eyes that, in the palace, had filled her with mislike and abhorrence as they looked upon the Queen. Again and again in her fitful sleep had she dreamt of him, and a sense of foreboding was heavy upon her—she seemed to hear the footfall of coming disaster. The anxiety of her soul lent an unnatural brightness to her eyes; so that more than one enamoured courtier made essay to engage her in conversation, and paid her deferential compliment when the Queen's eyes were not turned her way. Come to the dais, she was placed not far from her Majesty,

beside the Duke's Daughter, whose whimsical nature found frequent expression in what the Queen was wont to call "a merry volt." She seemed a privileged person, with whom none ventured to take liberties, and against whom none was entitled to bear offence, for her quips were free from malice, and her ingenuity in humour of mark. She it was who had put into the Queen's head that morning an idea which was presently to startle Angèle and all others.

Leicester was riding with the Knights Tilters, and as they cantered lightly past the dais, trailing their spears in obeisance, Elizabeth engaged herself in talk with Cecil, who was standing near, and appeared not to see the favourite. This was the first time since he had mounted to good fortune that she had not thrown him a favour to pick up with his spear and wear in her honour, and he could scarce believe that she had meant to neglect him. He half halted, but she only deigned an inclination of the head, and he spurred his horse angrily on with a muttered imprecation, yet, to all seeming, gallantly paying homage.

"There shall be doings ere this day is done. 'Beware the Gipsy'!" said the Duke's Daughter in a low tone to Angèle, and she laughed lightly.

"Who is the Gipsy?" asked Angèle, with good suspicion, however.

"Who but Leicester," answered the other. "Is he not black enough?"

"Why was he so called? Who put the name upon him?"

"Who but the Earl of Sussex as he died—as noble a chief, as true a counsellor as ever spoke truth to a Queen. But truth is not all at Court, and Sussex was no flatterer. Leicester bowed under the storm for a

moment when Sussex showed him in his true colours; but Sussex had no gift of intrigue, the tide turned, and so he broke his heart, and died. But he left a message which I sometimes remember with my collects. 'I am now passing to another world,' said he, 'and must leave you to your fortunes and to the Queen's grace and goodness; but beware the Gipsy, for he will be too hard for all of you; you know not the beast so well as I do.' But my Lord Sussex was wrong. One there is who knows him through and through, and hath little joy in the knowing."

The look in the eyes of the Duke's Daughter became like steel and her voice hardened, and Angèle realised that Leicester had in this beautiful and delicate maid-of-honour as bitter an enemy as ever brought down the mighty from their seats; that a pride had been sometime wounded, suffered an unwarrantable affront, which only innocence could feel so acutely. Her heart went out to the Duke's Daughter as it had never gone out to any of her sex since her mother's death, and she showed her admiration in her glance. The other saw it and smiled, slipping a hand in hers for a moment; and then a look, half-debating, half-triumphant, came into her face as her eyes followed Leicester down the green stretches of the tilting-yard.

The trumpet sounded, the people broke out in shouts of delight, the tilting began. For an hour the handsome joust went on, the Earl of Oxford, Charles Howard, Sir Henry Lee, Sir Christopher Hatton, and Leicester challenging, and so even was the combat that victory seemed to settle in the plumes of neither, though Leicester of them all showed not the greatest skill, while in some regards greatest grace and deportment. Suddenly there rode into the lists, whence, no one seemed to know,

so intent had the public gaze been fixed, so quickly had he come, a mounted figure all in white, and at the moment when Sir Henry Lee had cried aloud his challenge for the last time. Silence fell as the bright figure cantered down the list, lifted the gauge, and sat still upon his black steed. Consternation fell. None among the people or the Knights Tilters knew who the invader was, and Leicester called upon the Masters of the Ceremonies to demand his name and quality. The white horseman made no reply, but sat unmoved, while noise and turmoil suddenly sprang up around him.

Presently the voice of the Queen was heard clearly ringing through the lists. "His quality hath evidence. Set on."

The Duke's Daughter laughed, and whispered mischievously in Angèle's ear.

The gentlemen of England fared ill that day in the sight of all the people, for the challenger of the Knights Tilters was more than a match for each that came upon him. He rode like a wild horseman of Yucatan. Wary, resourceful, sudden in device and powerful in onset, he bore all down, until the Queen cried: "There hath not been such skill in England since my father rode these lists. Three of my best gentlemen down, and it hath been but breathing to him. Now, Sir Harry Lee, it is thy turn," she laughed as she saw the champion ride forward; "and next 'tis thine, Leicester. Ah, Leicester would have at him now!" she added sharply, as she saw the favourite spur forward before the gallant Lee. "He is full of choler—it becomes him, but it shall not be; bravery is not all. And if he failed"—she smiled acidly—"he would get him home to Kenilworth and show himself no more—if he failed, and the White Knight failed not! What think you, dove?" she

cried to the Duke's Daughter. "Would he not fall in the megrims for that England's honour had been overthrown? Leicester could not live if England's honour should be toppled down like our dear Chris Hatton and his gallants yonder."

The Duke's Daughter curtsied. "Methinks England's honour is in little peril—your Majesty knows well how to 'fend it. No subject keeps it."

"If I must 'fend it, dove, then Leicester there must not fight to-day. It shall surely be Sir Harry Lee. My Lord Leicester must have the place of honour at the last," she called aloud. Leicester swung his horse round and galloped to the Queen.

"Your Majesty," he cried in suppressed anger, "must I give place?"

"When all have failed and Leicester has won, then all yield place to Leicester," said the Queen drily.

The look on his face was not good to see, but he saluted gravely and rode away to watch the encounter between the most gallant Knight Tilter in England and the stranger. Rage was in his heart, and it blinded him to the certainty of his defeat, for he was not expert in the lists. But by a sure instinct he had guessed the identity of the White Horseman, and every nerve quivered with desire to meet him in combat. Last night's good work seemed to have gone for naught. Elizabeth's humour had changed; and to-day she seemed set on humiliating him before the nobles who hated him, before the people who had found in him the cause why the Queen had not married, so giving no heir to the throne. Perturbed and charged with anger as he was, however, the combat now forward soon chained his attention. Not in many a year had there been seen in England such a display of skill and

determination. The veteran Knight Tilter, who knew that the result of this business meant more than life to him, and that more than the honour of his comrades was at stake—even the valour of England which had been challenged—fought as he had never fought before, as no man had fought in England for many a year. At first the people cried aloud their encouragement; but as onset and attack after onset and attack showed that two masters of their craft, two desperate men, had met, and that the great sport had become a vital combat between their own champion and the champion of another land—Spain, France, Denmark, Russia, Italy? —a hush spread over the great space, and every eye was strained; men gazed with bated breath.

The green turf was torn and mangled, the horses reeked with sweat and foam, but overhead the soaring skylark sang, as it were, to express the joyance of the day. During many minutes the only sound that broke the stillness was the clash of armed men, the thud of hoofs, and the snorting and the wild breathing of the chargers. The lark's notes, however, ringing out over the lists freed the tongue of the Queen's fool, who suddenly ran out into the lists, in his motley and cap and bells, and in his high trilling voice sang a fool's song to the fighting twain:

"Who would lie down and close his eyes
While yet the lark sings o'er the dale?
Who would to Love make no replies,
Nor drink the nut-brown ale,
While throbs the pulse, and full 's the purse
And all the world 's for sale?"

Suddenly a cry of relief, of roaring excitement, burst from the people. Both horsemen and their chargers

were on the ground. The fight was over, the fierce game at an end. That which all had feared, even the Queen herself, as the fight fared on, had not come to pass—England's champion had not been beaten by the armed mystery, though the odds had seemed against him.

"Though wintry blasts may prove unkind,
When winter's past we do forget;
Love's breast in summer time is kind,
And all 's well while life 's with us yet—
Hey, ho, now the lark is mating,
Life's sweet wages are in waiting!"

Thus sang the fool as the two warriors were helped to their feet. Cumbered with their armour, and all dust-covered and blood-stained, though not seriously hurt, they were helped to their horses, and rode to the dais where the Queen sat.

"Ye have fought like men of old," she said, "and neither had advantage at the last. England's champion still may cry his challenge and not be forsworn, and he who challenged goeth in honour again from the lists. You, sir, who have challenged, shall we not see your face or hear your voice? For what country, for what prince lifted you the gauge and challenged England's honour?"

"I crave your high Majesty's pardon"—Angèle's heart stood still. Her love had not pierced his disguise, though Leicester's hate had done so on the instant—"I crave your noble Majesty's grace," answered the stranger, "that I may still keep my face covered in humility. My voice speaks for no country and for no prince. I have fought for mine own honour, and to prove to England's Queen that she hath a cham-

pion who smiteth with strong arm, as on me and my steed this hath been seen to-day."

"Gallantly thought and well said," answered Elizabeth; "but England's champion and his strong arm have no victory. If gifts were given they must needs be cut in twain. But answer me, what is your country? I will not have it that any man pick up the gauge of England for his own honour. What is your country?"

"I am an exile, your high Majesty; and the only land for which I raise my sword this day is that land where I have found safety from my enemies."

The Queen turned and smiled at the Duke's Daughter. "I knew not where my own question might lead, but he hath turned it to full account," she said, under her breath. "His tongue is as ready as his spear. Then ye have both laboured in England's honour, and I drink to you both," she added, and raised to her lips a glass of wine which a page presented. "I love ye both—in your high qualities," she hastened to add with dry irony, and her eye rested mockingly on Leicester.

"My lords and gentlemen and all of my kingdom," she added in a clear voice, insistent in its force, "ye have come upon May Day to take delight of England in my gardens, and ye are welcome. Ye have seen such a sight as doeth good to the eyes of brave men. It hath pleased me well, and I am constrained to say to you what, for divers great reasons, I have kept to my own counsels, labouring for your good. The day hath come, however, the day and the hour when ye shall know that wherein I propose to serve you as ye well deserve. It is my will—and now I see my way to its good fulfilment—that I remain no longer in that virgin state wherein I have ever lived."

Great cheering here broke in, and for a time she could get no further. Ever alive to the bent of the popular mind, she had chosen a perfect occasion to take them into her confidence—however little or much she would abide by her words, or intended the union of which she spoke. In the past she had counselled with her great advisers, with Cecil and the rest, and through them messages were borne to the people; but now she spoke direct to them all, and it had its immediate reward—the acclamations were as those with which she was greeted when she first passed through the streets of London on inheriting the crown.

Well pleased, she continued: "This I will do with expedition and weightiest judgment, for of little account though I am, he that sits with the Queen of England in this realm must needs be a prince indeed. . . . So be ye sure of this that ye shall have your heartmost wishes, and there shall be one to come after me who will wear this crown even as I have worn, in direct descent, my father's crown. Our dearest sister, the Queen of the Scots, hath been delivered of a fair son; and in high affection the news thereof she hath sent me, with a palfry which I shall ride among you in token of the love I bear her Majesty. She hath in her time got an heir to the throne with which we are ever in kinship and alliance, and I in my time shall give ye your heart's desire."

Angèle, who had, with palpitating heart and swimming head, seen Michel de la Forêt leave the lists and disappear among the trees, as mysteriously as he came, was scarce conscious of the cheers and riotous delight that followed Elizabeth's tactful if delusive speech to the people. A few whispered words from the Duke's Daughter had told her that Michel had obeyed the

Queen's command in entering the lists and taking up the challenge; and that she herself, carrying the royal message to him and making arrangements for his accoutrement and mounting, had urged him to obedience. She observed drily that he had needed little pressure, and that his eyes had lighted at the prospect of the combat. Apart from his innate love of fighting, he had realised that in the moment of declining to enter the Queen's service he had been at a disadvantage, and that his courage was open to attack by the incredulous or malicious. This would have mattered little were it not that he had been given unusual importance as a prisoner by the Queen's personal notice of himself. He had, therefore, sprung to the acceptance, and sent his humble duty to the Queen by her winsome messenger, who, with conspicuous dramatic skill, had arranged secretly, with the help of a Gentleman Pensioner and the Master of the Horse, his appearance and his exit. That all succeeded as she had planned quickened her pulses, and made her heart still warmer to Angèle, who, now that all was over, and her Huguenot lover had gone his mysterious ways, seemed lost in a troubled reverie.

It was a troubled reverie indeed, for Angèle's eyes were on the stranger who was present with Sir Andrew Melvill the night before. Her gaze upon him now became fixed and insistent, for the sense of foreboding so heavy on her deepened to a torturing suspense. Where had she seen this man before? To what day or hour in her past did he belong? What was there in his smooth, smiling, malicious face that made her blood run cold? As she watched him, he turned his head. She followed his eyes. The horse which Mary Queen of Scots had sent with the message of the birth

of her son was being led to the Queen by the dark-browed, pale-faced churl who had brought it from Scotland. She saw a sharp dark look pass between the two.

Suddenly her sight swam, she swayed and would have fainted, but resolution steadied her, and a low exclamation broke from her lips. Now she knew!

The face that had eluded her was at last in the grasp of horrified memory. It was the face of one who many years ago was known to have poisoned the Duc de Chambly by anointing the pommel of his saddle with a delicate poison which the rider would touch, and touching would, perhaps, carry to his nostrils or mouth as he rode, and die upon the instant. She herself had seen the Duc de Chambly fall; had seen this man fly from Paris for his life; and had thereafter known of his return to favour at the court of Mary and Francis, for nothing could be proved against him. The memory flashed like lightning through her brain. She moved swiftly forward despite the detaining hand of the Duke's Daughter. The Queen was already mounted, her hand already upon the pommel of the saddle.

Elizabeth noted the look of anguished anxiety in Angèle's eyes, her face like that of one who had seen souls in purgatory; and some swift instinct, born of years upon years of peril in old days when her life was no boon to her enemies, made her lean towards the girl, whose quick whispered words were to her as loud as thunder. She was, however, composed and still. Not a tremor passed through her.

"Your wish is granted, mistress," she said aloud, then addressed a word to Cecil at her side, who passed on her command. Presently she turned slowly to the spot where Sir Andrew Melvill and the other sat upon their horses. She scanned complacently the faces of

both, then her eyes settled steadily on the face of the murderer. Still gazing intently she drew the back of her gloved fingers along the pommel. The man saw the motion, unnoted and unsignificant to any other save Angèle, meaningless even to Melvill, the innocent and honest gentleman at his side; and he realised that the Queen had had a warning. Noting the slight stir among the gentlemen round him, he knew that his game was foiled, that there was no escape. He was not prepared for what followed.

In a voice to be heard only at small distance, the Queen said calmly:

"This palfry sent me by my dear sister of Scotland shall bear me among you, friends; and in days to come *I will remember how she hath given new life to me by her loving message.* Sir Andrew Melvill, I shall have further speech with you; and you, sir,"—speaking to the sinister figure by his side—"come hither."

The man dismounted, and with unsteady step came forward. Elizabeth held out her gloved hand for him to kiss. His face turned white. It was come soon, his punishment. None knew save Angèle and the Queen the doom that was upon him, if Angèle's warning was well-founded. He knelt, and bent his head over her hand.

"Salute, sir," she said in a low voice.

He touched his lips to her fingers. She pressed them swiftly against his mouth. An instant, then he rose and stepped backwards to his horse. Tremblingly, blindly, he mounted.

A moment passed, then Elizabeth rode on with her ladies behind her, her gentlemen beside her. As she passed slowly, the would-be regicide swayed and fell from his horse, and stirred no more.

Elizabeth rode on, her hand upon the pommel of the saddle. So she rode for a full half-hour, and came back to her palace. But she raised not her gloved right hand above the pommel, and she dismounted with exceeding care.

That night the man who cared for the horse died secretly as had done his master, with the Queen's glove pressed to his nostrils by one whom Cecil could trust. And the matter was hidden from the Court and the people; for it was given out that Melvill's friend had died of some heart trouble.

CHAPTER XV

It seemed an unspeakable smallness in a man of such high place in the State, whose hand had tied and untied myriad knots of political and court intrigue, that he should stoop to a game which any pettifogging hanger-on might play—and reap scorn in the playing. By insidious arts, Leicester had in his day turned the Queen's mind to his own will; had foiled the diplomacy of the Spaniard, the German and the Gaul; had by subterranean means checkmated the designs of the Medici; had traced his way through plot and counter-plot, hated by most, loved by none save, maybe, his Royal mistress to whom he was now more a custom than a cherished friend. Year upon year he had built up his influence. None had championed him save himself, and even from the consequences of rashness and folly he had risen to a still higher place in the kingdom. But such as Leicester are ever at last a sacrifice to the laborious means by which they achieve their greatest ends—means contemptible and small.

To the great intriguers every little detail, every commonplace insignificance is used—and must be used by them alone—to further their dark causes. They cannot trust their projects to brave lieutenants, to faithful subordinates. They cannot say, "Here is the end; this is the work to be done; upon your shoulders be the burden!" They must "stoop to conquer." Every miserable detail becomes of moment, until by-and-by the art of intrigue and conspiracy begins to lose proportion in their minds. The detail has ever been so

important, conspiracy so much second nature, that they must needs be intriguing and conspiring when the occasion is trifling and the end negligible.

To all intriguers life has lost romance; there is no poem left in nature; no ideal, personal, public or national, detains them in its wholesome influence; no great purpose allures them; they have no causes for which to die—save themselves. They are so honeycombed with insincerity and the vice of thought, that by-and-by all colours are as one, all pathways the same; because, whichever hue of light breaks upon their world they see it through the grey-cloaked mist of falsehood; and whether the path be good or bad they would still walk in it crookedly. How many men and women Leicester had tracked or lured to their doom; over how many men and women he had stepped to his place of power, history speaks not carefully; but the traces of his deeds run through a thousand archives, and they suggest plentiful sacrifices to a subverted character.

Favourite of a Queen, he must now stoop to set a trap for the ruin of as simple a soul as ever stepped upon the soil of England; and his dark purposes had not even the excuse of necessity on the one hand, of love or passion on the other. An insane jealousy of the place the girl had won in the consideration of the Queen, of her lover who, he thought, had won a still higher place in the same influence, was his only motive for action at first. His cruelty was not redeemed even by the sensuous interest the girl might arouse in a reckless nature by her beauty and her charm.

So the great Leicester—the Gipsy, as the dead Sussex had called him—lay in wait in Greenwich Park for Angèle to pass, like some orchard thief in the blossoming trees. Knowing the path by which she would come

to her father's cottage from the palace, he had placed himself accordingly. He had thought he might have to wait long or come often for the perfect opportunity; but it seemed as if Fate played his game for him, and that once again the fruit he would pluck should fall into his palm. Bright-eyed, and elated from a long talk with the Duke's Daughter, who had given her a message from the Queen, Angèle had abstractedly taken the wrong path in the wood. Leicester saw that it would lead her into the maze some distance off. Making a *détour*, he met her at the moment she discovered her mistake. The light from the royal word her friend had brought was still in her face; but it was crossed by perplexity now.

He stood still as though astonished at seeing her, a smile upon his face. So perfectly did he play his part that she thought the meeting accidental; and though in her heart she had a fear of the man and knew how bitter an enemy he was of Michel's, his urbane power, his skilful diplomacy of courtesy had its way. These complicated lives, instinct with contradiction, have the interest of forbidden knowledge. The dark experiences of life leave their mark and give such natures that touch of mystery which allures even those who have high instincts and true feelings, as one peeps over a hidden depth and wonders what lies beyond the dark. So Angèle, suddenly arrested, was caught by the sense of mystery in the man, by the fascination of *finesse*, of dark power; and it was womanlike that all on an instant she should dream of the soul of goodness in things evil.

Thus in life we are often surprised out of long years of prejudice, and even of dislike and suspicion, by some fortuitous incident, which might have chanced to two

who had every impulse towards each other, not such antagonisms as lay between Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and this Huguenot refugee. She had every cue to hate him. Each moment of her life in England had been beset with peril because of him—peril to the man she loved, therefore peril to herself. And yet, so various is the nature of woman, that, while steering straitly by one star, she levies upon the light of other stars. Faithful and sincere, yet loving power, curious and adventurous, she must needs, without intention, without purpose, stray into perilous paths.

As Leicester stepped suddenly into Angèle's gaze, she was only, as it were, conscious of a presence in itself alluring by virtue of the history surrounding it. She was surprised out of an instinctive dislike, and the cue she had to loathe him was for the moment lost.

Unconsciously, unintentionally, she smiled at him now, then, realising, retreated, shrinking from him, her face averted. Man or woman had found in Leicester the delicate and intrepid gamester, exquisite in the choice of detail, masterful in the breadth of method. And now, as though his whole future depended on this interview, he brought to bear a life-long skill to influence her. He had determined to set the Queen against her. He did not know—not even he—that she had saved the Queen's life on that auspicious May Day when Harry Lee had fought the white knight Michel de la Forêt and halved the honours of the lists with him. If he had but known that the Queen had hid from him this fact—this vital thing touching herself and England, he would have viewed his future with a vaster distrust. But there could be no surer sign of Elizabeth's growing coldness and intended breach than that she had hid from him the dreadful incident of the poisoned glove, and the

swift execution of the would-be murderer, and had made Cecil her only confidant. But he did know that Elizabeth herself had commanded Michel de la Forêt to the lists; and his mad jealousy impelled him to resort to a satanic cunning towards these two fugitives, who seemed to have mounted within a few short days as far as had he in thrice as many years to a high place in the regard of the Majesty of England.

To disgrace them both; to sow distrust of the girl in the Queen's mind; to make her seem the opposite of what she was; to drop in her own mind suspicion of her lover; to drive her to some rash act, some challenge of the Queen herself—that was his plan. He knew how little Elizabeth's imperious spirit would brook any challenge from this fearless girl concerning De la Forêt. But to convince her that the Queen favoured Michel in some shadowed sense, that De la Forêt was privy to a dark compact—so deep a plot was all worthy of a larger end. He had well inspired the Court of France through its ambassador to urge the Medici to press actively and bitterly for De la Forêt's return to France and to the beheading sword that waited for him; and his task had been made light by international difficulties, which made the heart of Elizabeth's foreign policy friendship with France and an alliance against Philip of Spain. She had, therefore, opened up, even in the past few days, negotiations once again for the long-talked-of marriage with the Duke of Anjou, the brother of the King, son of the Medici. State policy was involved, and, if De la Forêt might be a counter, the pledge of exchange in the game, as it were, the path would once more be clear.

He well believed that Elizabeth's notice of De la Forêt was but a fancy that would pass, as a hundred

times before such fancies had come and gone; but against that brighter prospect there lay the fact that never before had she shown himself such indifference. In the past she had raged against him, she had imprisoned him, she had driven him from her presence in her anger, but always her paroxysms of rage had been succeeded by paroxysms of tenderness. Now he saw a colder light in the sky, a greyer horizon met his eye. So at every corner of the compass he played for the breaking of the spell.

Yet as he now bowed low before Angèle there seemed to show in his face a very candour of surprise, of pleasure, joined to a something friendly and protective in his glance and manner. His voice insinuated that bygones should be bygones; it suggested that she had misunderstood him. It pleaded against the injustice of her prejudice.

"So far from home!" he said with a smile.

"More miles from home," she replied, thinking of never-returning days in France, "than I shall ever count again."

"But no, methinks the palace is within a whisper," he responded.

"Lord Leicester knows well I am a prisoner; that I no longer abide in the palace," she answered.

He laughed lightly. "An imprisonment in a Queen's friendship. I bethink me, it is three hours since I saw you go to the palace. It is a few worthless seconds since you have got your freedom."

She nettled at his tone. "Lord Leicester takes great interest in my unimportant goings and comings. I cannot think it is because I go and come."

He chose to misunderstand her meaning. Drawing closer he bent over her shoulder. "Since your arrival

here, my only diary is the tally of your coming and going." Suddenly, as though by an impulse of great frankness, he added in a low tone:

"And is it strange that I should follow you—that I should worship grace and virtue? Men call me this and that. You have no doubt been filled with dark tales of my misdeeds. Has there been one in the Court, even one, who, living by my bounty or my patronage, has said one good word of me? And why? For long years the Queen, who, maybe, might have been better counselled, chose me for her friend, adviser—because I was true to her. I have lived for the Queen, and living for her have lived for England. Could I keep—I ask you, could I keep myself blameless in the midst of flattery, intrigue, and conspiracy? I admit that I have played with fiery weapons in my day; and must needs still do so. The incorruptible cannot exist in the corrupted air of this Court. You have come here with the light of innocence and truth about you. At first I could scarce believe that such goodness lived, hardly understood it. The light half-blinded and embarrassed; but, at last, I saw! You of all this Court have made me see what sort of life I might have lived. You have made me dream the dreams of youth and high unsullied purpose once again. Was it strange that in the dark pathways of the Court I watched your footsteps come and go, carrying radiance with you? No—Leicester has learned how sombre, sinister, has been his past, by a presence which is the soul of beauty, of virtue, and of happy truth. Lady, my heart is yours. I worship you."

Overborne for the moment by the eager, searching eloquence of his words, she had listened bewildered to him. Now she turned upon him with panting breath and said:

"My lord, my lord, I will hear no more. You know I love Monsieur de la Forêt, for whose sake I am here in England—for whose sake I still remain."

"'Tis a labour of love but ill requited," he answered with suggestion in his tone.

"What mean you, my lord?" she asked sharply, a kind of blind agony in her voice; for she felt his meaning, and though she did not believe him, and knew in her soul he slandered, there was a sting, for slander ever scorches where it touches.

"Can you not see?" he said. "May Day—why did the Queen command him to the lists? Why does she keep him here—in the palace? Why, against the will of France, her ally, does she refuse to send him forth? Why, unheeding the laughter of the Court, does she favour this unimportant stranger, brave though he be? Why should she smile upon him? . . . Can you not see, sweet lady?"

"You know well why the Queen detains him here," she answered calmly now. "In the Queen's understanding with France, exiles who preach the faith are free from extradition. You heard what the Queen required of him—that on Trinity Day he should preach before her, and upon this preaching should depend his safety."

"Indeed, so her Majesty said with great humour," replied Leicester. "So indeed she said; but when we hide our faces a thin veil suffices. The man is a soldier—a soldier born. Why should he turn priest now? I pray you, think again. He was quick of wit; the Queen's meaning was clear to him; he rose with seeming innocence to the fly, and she landed him at the first toss. But what is forward bodes no good to you, dear star of heaven. I have known the Queen for half a

lifetime. She has wild whims and dangerous fancies, fills her hours of leisure with experiences—an artist is the Queen. She means no good to you."

She had made as if to leave him, though her eyes searched in vain for the path which she should take; but she now broke in impatiently:

"Poor, unnoted though I am, the Queen of England is my friend," she answered. "What evil could she wish me? From me she has naught to fear. I am not an atom in her world. Did she but lift her finger I am done. But she knows that, humble though I be, I would serve her to my last breath; because I know, my Lord Leicester, how many there are who serve her foully, faithlessly; and there should be those by her who would serve her singly."

His eyes half closed, he beat his toe upon the ground. He frowned, as though he had no wish to hurt her by words which he yet must speak. With calculated thought he faltered.

"Yet do you not think it strange," he said at last, "that Monsieur de la Forêt should be within the palace ever, and that you should be banished from the palace? Have you never seen the fly and the spider in the web? Do you not know that they who have the power to bless or ban, to give joy or withhold it, appear to give when they mean to withhold? God bless us all—how has your innocence involved your judgment!"

She suddenly flushed to the eyes. "I have wit enough," she said acidly, "to feel that truth which life's experience may not have taught me. It is neither age nor evil that teaches one to judge 'twixt black and white. God gives the true divination to human hearts that need."

It was a contest in which Leicester revelled—simplic-

ity and single-mindedness against the multifarious and double-tongued. He had made many efforts in his time to conquer argument and prejudice. When he chose, none could be more insinuating or turn the flank of a proper argument by more adroit suggestion. He used his power now.

"You think she means well by you? You think that she, who has a thousand ladies of a kingdom at her call, of the best and most beautiful—and even," his voice softened, "though you are more beautiful than all, that beauty would soften her towards you? When was it Elizabeth loved beauty? When was it that her heart warmed towards those who would love or wed? Did she not imprison me, even in these palace grounds, for one whole year because I sought to marry? Has she not a hundred times sent from her presence women with faces like flowers because they were in contrast to her own? Do you see love blossoming at this Court? God's Son! but she would keep us all like babes in Eden an' she could, unmated and unloved."

He drew quickly to her and leant over her, whispering down her shoulder. "Do you think there is any reason why all at once she should change her mind and cherish lovers?"

She looked up at him fearlessly and firmly.

"In truth, I do. My Lord Leicester, you have lived in the circle of her good pleasure, near to her noble Majesty, as you say, for half a lifetime. Have you not found a reason why now or any time she should cherish love and lovers? Ah, no, you have seen her face, you have heard her voice, but you have not known her heart!"

"Ah, opportunity lacked," he said in irony and with a reminiscent smile. "I have been busy with State

affairs, I have not sat on cushions, listening to royal fingers on the virginals. Still, I ask you, do you think there is a reason why from her height she should stoop down to rescue you or give you any joy? Wherefore should the Queen do aught to serve you? Wherefore should she save your lover?"

It was on Angèle's lips to answer, "Because I saved her life on May Day." It was on her lips to tell of the poisoned glove, but she only smiled, and said:

"But, yes, I think, my lord, there is a reason, and in that reason I have faith."

Leicester saw how firmly she was fixed in her idea, how rooted was her trust in the Queen's intentions towards her; and he guessed there was something hidden which gave her such supreme confidence.

"If she means to save him, why does she not save him now? Why not end the business in a day—not stretch it over these long mid-summer weeks?"

"I do not think it strange," she answered. "He is a political prisoner. Messages must come and go between England and France. Besides, who calleth for haste? Is it I who have most at stake? It is not the first time I have been at Court, my lord. In these high places things are orderly,"—a touch of sarcasm came into her tone,—"life is not a mighty rushing wind, save to those whom vexing passion drives to hasty deeds."

She made to move on once more, but paused, still not certain of her way.

"Permit me to show you," he said with a laugh and a gesture towards a path. "Not that—this is the shorter. I will take you to a turning which leads straight to your durance—and another which leads elsewhere."

She could not say no, because she had, in very truth, lost her way, and she might wander far and be in dan-

ger. Also, she had no fear of him. Steeled to danger in the past, she was not timid; but, more than all, the game of words between them had had its fascination. The man himself, by virtue of what he was, had his fascination also. The thing inherent in all her sex, to peep over the hedge, to skirt dangerous fires lightly, to feel the warmth distantly and not be scorched—that was in her, too; and she lived according to her race and the long predisposition of the ages. Most women like her—as good as she—have peeped and stretched out hands to the alluring fire and come safely through, wiser and no better. But many, too, bewildered and confused by what they see—as light from a mirror flashed into the eye half blinds—have peeped over the hedge and, miscalculating their power of self-control, have entered in, and returned no more into the quiet garden of unstraying love.

Leicester quickly put on an air of gravity. "I warn you that danger lies before you. If you cross the Queen —and you will cross the Queen when you know the truth, as I know it—you will pay a heavy price for refusing Leicester as your friend."

She made a protesting motion and seemed about to speak, but suddenly, with a passionate gesture, Leicester added: "Let them go their way. Monsieur de la Forêt will be tossed aside before another winter comes. Do you think he can abide here in the midst of plot and intrigue, and hated by the people of the Court? He is doomed. But more, he is unworthy of you; while I can serve you well, and I can love you well." She shrank away from him. "No, do not turn from me, for in very truth, Leicester's heart has been pierced by the inevitable arrow. You think I mean you evil?"

He paused as though uncertain how to proceed, then

with a sudden impulse continued: "No! no! And if there be a saving grace in marriage, marriage it shall be, if you will but hear me. You shall be my wife—Leicester's wife. As I have mounted to power so I will hold power with you—with you, the brightest spirit that ever England saw. Worthy of a kingdom with you beside me, I shall win to greater, happier days; and at Kenilworth, where kings and queens have lodged, you shall be ruler. We will leave this Court until Elizabeth, betrayed by those who know not how to serve her, shall send for me again. Here—the power behind the throne—you and I will sway this realm through the aging, sentimental Queen. Listen, and look at me in the eyes—I speak the truth, you read my heart. You think I hated you and hated De la Forêt. By all the gods, it's true I hated him, because I saw that he would come between me and the Queen. A man must have one great passion. Life itself must be a passion. Power was my passion—power, not the Queen. You have broken all that down. I yield it all to you—for your sake and my own. I would steal from life yet before my sun goes to its setting a few years of truth and honesty and clear design. At heart I am a patriot—a loyal Englishman. Your cause—the cause of Protestantism—did I not fight for it at Rochelle? Have I not ever urged the Queen to spend her revenue for your cause, to send her captains and her men to fight for it?"

She raised her head in interest, and her lips murmured: "Yes, yes, I know you did that."

He saw his advantage and pursued it. "See, I will be honest with you—honest, at last, as I have wished in vain to be, for honesty was misunderstood. It is not so with you—you understand. Dear, light of womanhood, I speak the truth now. I have been evil in my day—

I admit it—evil because I was in the midst of evil. I betrayed because I was betrayed; I slew, else I should have been slain. We have had dark days in England, privy conspiracy and rebellion; and I have had to thread my way through dreadful courses by a thousand blind paths. Would it be no joy to you if I, through your influence, recast my life—remade my policy, renewed my youth—pursuing principle where I have pursued opportunity? Angèle, come to Kenilworth with me. Leave De la Forêt to his fate. The way to happiness is with me. Will you come?"

He had made his great effort. As he spoke he almost himself believed that he told the truth. Under the spell of his own emotional power it seemed as though he meant to marry her, as though he could find happiness in the union. He had almost persuaded himself to be what he would have her to believe he might be.

Under the warmth and convincing force of his words her pulses had beat faster, her heart had throbbed in her throat, her eyes had glistened; but not with that light which they had shed for Michel de la Forêt. How different was this man's wooing—its impetuous, audacious, tender violence, with that quiet, powerful, almost sacred gravity of her Camisard lover! It is this difference—the weighty, emotional difference—between a desperate passion and a pure love which has ever been so powerful in twisting the destinies of a moiety of the world to misery, who otherwise would have stayed contented, inconspicuous and good. Angèle would have been more than human if she had not felt the spell of the ablest intriguer, of the most fascinating diplomatist of his day.

Before he spoke of marriage the thrill—the unconvincing thrill though it was—of a perilous temptation

was upon her; but the very thing most meant to move her only made her shudder; for in her heart of hearts she knew that he was ineradicably false. To be married to one constitutionally untrue would be more terrible a fate for her than to be linked to him in a lighter, more dissoluble a bond. So do the greatest tricksters of this world overdo their part, so play the wrong card when every past experience suggests it is the card to play. He knew by the silence that followed his words, and the slow, steady look she gave him, that she was not won nor on the way to the winning.

"My lord," she said at last, and with a courage which steadied her affrighted and perturbed innocence, "you are eloquent, you are fruitful of flattery, of those things which have, I doubt not, served you well in your day. But, if you see your way to a better life, it were well you should choose one of nobler mould than I. I am not made for sacrifice, to play the missioner and snatch brands from the burning. I have enough to do to keep my own feet in the ribbon-path of right. You must look elsewhere for that guardian influence which is to make of you a paragon."

"No, no," he answered sharply, "you think the game not worth the candle—you doubt me and what I can do for you; my sincerity, my power you doubt."

"Indeed, yes, I doubt both," she answered gravely, "for you would have me believe that I have power to lead you. With how small a mind you credit me! You think, too, that you sway this kingdom; but I know that you stand upon a cliff's edge, and that the earth is fraying 'neath your tread. You dare to think that you have power to drag down with you the man who honours me with—"

"With his love, you'd say. Yet he will leave you

fretting out your soul until the sharp-edged truth cuts your heart in twain. Have you no pride? I care not what you say of me—say your worst, and I will not resent it, for I will still prove that your way lies with me."

She gave a bitter sigh, and touched her forehead with trembling fingers. "If words could prove it, I had been convinced but now, for they are well devised, and they have music too; but such a music, my lord, as would drown the truth in the soul of a woman. Your words allure, but you have learned the art of words. You yourself—oh, my lord, you who have tasted all the pleasures of this world, could you then have the heart to steal from one who has so little that little which gives her happiness?"

"You know not what can make you happy—I can teach you that. By God's Son! but you have wit and intellect and are a match for a prince, not for a cast-off Camisard. I shall ere long be Lord-Lieutenant of these Isles—of England and Ireland. Come to my nest. We will fly far—ah, your eye brightens, your heart leaps to mine—I feel it now, I—"

"Oh, have done, have done," she passionately broke in; "I would rather die, be torn upon the rack, burnt at the stake, than put my hand in yours! And you do not wish it—you speak but to destroy, not to cherish. While you speak to me I see all those"—she made a gesture as though to put something from her—"all those to whom you have spoken as you have done to me. I hear the myriad falsehoods you have told—one whelming confusion. I feel the blindness which has crept upon them—those poor women—as you have sown the air with the dust of the passion which you call love. Oh, you never knew what love

meant, my lord! I doubt if, when you lay in your mother's arms, you turned to her with love. You never did one kindly act for love, no generous thought was ever born in you by love. Sir, I know it as though it were written in a book; your life has been one long calculation—your sympathy or kindness a calculated thing. Good-nature, emotion you may have had, but never the divine thing by which the world is saved. Were there but one little place where that Eden flower might bloom within your heart, you could not seek to ruin that love which lives in mine and fills it, conquering all the lesser part of me. I never knew of how much love I was capable until I heard you speak to-day. Out of your life's experience, out of all that you have learned of women good and evil, you—for a selfish, miserable purpose—would put the gyves upon my wrists, make me a pawn in your dark game; a pawn which you would lose without a thought as the game went on.

"If you must fight, my lord, if you must ruin Monsieur de la Forêt and a poor Huguenot girl, do it by greater means than this. You have power, you say. Use it then; destroy us, if you will. Send us to the Medici: bring us to the block, murder us—that were no new thing to Lord Leicester. But do not stoop to treachery and falsehood to thrust us down. Oh, you have made me see the depths of shame to-day! But yet," her voice suddenly changed, a note of plaintive force filled it—"I have learned much this hour—more than I ever knew. Perhaps it is that we come to knowledge only through fire and tears." She smiled sadly. "I suppose that sometime some day, this page of life would have scorched my sight. Oh, my lord, what was there in me that you dared speak so to

me? Was there naught to have stayed your tongue and stemmed the tide in which you would engulf me?"

He had listened as in a dream at first. She had read him as he might read himself, had revealed him with the certain truth, as none other had done in all his days. He was silent for a long moment, then raised his hand in protest.

"You have a strange idea of what makes offence and shame. I offered you marriage," he said complacently. "And when I come to think upon it, after all that you have said, fair Huguenot, I see no cause for railing. You call me this and that; to you I am a liar, a rogue, a cut-throat, what you will; and yet, and yet, I will have my way—I will have my way in the end."

"You offered me marriage—and meant it not. Do I not know? Did you rely so little on your compelling powers, my lord, that you must needs resort to that bait? Do you think that you will have your way to-morrow if you have failed to-day?"

With a quick change of tone and a cold, scornful laugh he rejoined: "Do you intend to measure swords with me?"

"No, no, my lord," she answered quietly; "what should one poor unfriended girl do in contest with the Earl of Leicester? But yet, in very truth, I have friends, and in my hour of greatest need I shall go seeking."

She was thinking of the Queen. He guessed her thought.

"You will not be so mad," he said urbanely again. "Of what can you complain to the Queen? Tut, tut, you must seek other friends than the Majesty of England!"

"Then, my lord, I will," she answered bravely. "I

will seek the help of such a Friend as fails not when all fails, even He who putteth down the mighty from their seats and exalteth the humble."

"Well, well, if I have not touched your heart," he answered gallantly, "I at least have touched your wit and intellect. Once more I offer you alliance. Think well before you decline."

He had no thought that he would succeed, but it was ever his way to return to the charge. It had been the secret of his life's success so far. He had never taken a refusal. He had never believed that when man or woman said no that no was meant; and, if it were meant, he still believed that constant dropping would wear away the stone. He still held that persistence was the greatest lever in the world, that unswerving persistence was the master of opportunity.

They had now come to two paths in the park leading different ways.

"This road leads to Kenilworth, this to your prison," he said with a slow gesture, his eyes fixed upon hers.

"I will go to my prison, then," she said, stepping forward, "and alone, by your leave."

Leicester was a good sportsman. Though he had been beaten all along the line, he hid his deep chagrin, choked down the rage that was in him. Smiling, he bowed low.

"I will do myself the honour to visit your prison to-morrow," he said.

"My father will welcome you, my lord," she answered, and, gathering up her skirt, ran down the pathway.

He stood unmoving, and watched her disappear.

"But I shall have my way with them both," he said aloud.

The voice of a singer sounded in the green wood. Half consciously Leicester listened. The words came shrilling through the trees:

> "Oh, love, it is a lily flower,
> (*Sing, my captain, sing, my lady!*)
> The sword shall cleave it, Life shall leave it—
> Who shall know the hour?
> (*Sing, my lady, still!*)"

Presently the jingling of bells mingled with the song, then a figure in motley burst upon him. It was the Queen's fool.

"Brother, well met—most happily met!" he cried.

"And why well met, fool?" asked Leicester.

"Prithee, my work grows heavy, brother. I seek another fool for the yoke. Here are my bells for you. I will keep my cap. And so we will work together, fool: you for the morning, I for the afternoon, and the devil take the night-time! So God be with you, Obligato!"

With a laugh he leaped into the undergrowth, and left Leicester standing with the bells in his hand.

CHAPTER XVI

Angèle had come to know, as others in like case have ever done, how wretched indeed is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours. She had saved the Queen's life upon May Day, and on the evening of that day the Queen had sent for her, had made such high and tender acknowledgment of her debt as would seem to justify for her perpetual honour. And what Elizabeth said she meant; but in a life set in forests of complications and opposing interests the political overlapped the personal in her nature. Thus it was that she had kept the princes of the world dangling, advancing towards marriage with them, retreating suddenly, setting off one house against the other, allying herself to one European power to-day, with another to-morrow, her own person and her crown the pawn with which she played. It was not a beautiful thing in a woman, but it was what a woman could do; and, denied other powers given to men—as to her father—she resorted to astute but doubtful devices to advance her diplomacy. Over all was self-infatuation, the bane of princes, the curse of greatness, the source of wide injustice. It was not to be expected, as Leicester had said, that Elizabeth, save for the whim of the moment, would turn aside to confer benefit upon Angèle or to keep her in mind, unless constrained to do so for some political reason.

The girl had charmed the Queen, had, by saving her life, made England her long debtor; but Leicester had judged rightly in believing that the Queen might find the debt irksome; that her gratitude would be corroded

by other destructive emotions. It was true that Angèle had saved her life, but Michel had charmed her eye. He had proved himself a more gallant fighter than any in her kingdom; and had done it, as he had said, in her honour. So, as her admiration for Michel grew, her debt to Angèle became burdensome; and, despite her will, there stole into her mind the old petulance and smothered anger against beauty and love and marriage. She could ill bear that one near her person should not be content to flourish in the light and warmth of her own favour, setting aside all other small affections. So it was that she had sent Angèle to her father and kept De la Forêt in the palace. Perplexed, troubled by new developments, the birth of a son to Mary Queen of Scots, the demand of her Parliament that she should marry, the pressure of foreign policy which compelled her to open up again negotiations for marriage with the Duke of Anjou—all these combined to detach her from the interest she had suddenly felt in Angèle. But, by instinct, she knew also that Leicester, through jealousy, had increased the complication; and, fretful under the long influence he had had upon her, she steadily lessened intercourse with him. The duel he fought with Lemprière on May Day came to her ears through the Duke's Daughter, and she seized upon it with sharp petulance. First she ostentatiously gave housing and care to Lemprière, and went to visit him; then, having refused Leicester audience, wrote to him.

"What is this I hear," she scrawled upon the paper,—"that you have forced a quarrel with the Lord of Rozel, and have wellny ta'en his life! Is swording then your dearest vice that you must urge it on a harmless gentleman, and my visitor? Do you think you hold a charter of freedom for your self-will? Have a care, Leicester,

or, by God! you shall know another sword surer than your own."

The rage of Leicester on receiving this knew no bounds; for though he had received from Elizabeth stormy letters before, none had had in it the cold irony of this missive. The cause of it? Desperation seized him. With a mad disloyalty he read in every word of Elizabeth's letter, Michel de la Forêt, refugee. With madder fury he determined to strike for the immediate ruin of De la Forêt, and Angèle with him—for had she not thrice repulsed him as though he had been some village captain? After the meeting in the maze he had kept his promise of visiting her "prison." By every art, and without avail, he had through patient days sought to gain an influence over her; for he saw that if he could but show the Queen that the girl was open to his advances, accepted his protection, her ruin would be certain—in anger Elizabeth would take revenge upon both refugees. But however much he succeeded with Monsieur Aubert, he failed wholly with Angèle. She repulsed him still with the most certain courtesy, with the greatest outward composure; but she had to make her fight alone, for the Queen forbade intercourse with Michel, and she must have despaired but for the messages sent now and then by the Duke's Daughter.

Through M. Aubert, to whom Leicester was diligently courteous, and whom he sought daily, discussing piously the question of religion so dear to the old man's heart, he strove to foster in Angèle's mind the suspicion he had ventured at their meeting in the maze, that the Queen, through personal interest in Michel, was saving his life to keep him in her household. So well did he work on the old man's feelings that when he offered his own pro-

tection to M. Aubert and Angèle, whatever the issue with De la Forêt might be, he was met with an almost tearful response of gratitude. It was the moment to convey a deep distrust of De la Forêt to the mind of the old refugee, and it was subtly done.

Were it not better to leave the Court where only danger surrounded them, and find safety on Leicester's own estate, where no man living could molest them? Were it not well to leave Michel de la Forêt to his fate, whatever it would be? Thrice within a week the Queen had sent for De la Forêt—what reason was there for that, unless the Queen had a secret personal interest in him? Did M. Aubert think it was only a rare touch of humour which had turned De la Forêt into a preacher, and set his fate upon a sermon to be preached before the Court? He himself had long held high office, had been near to her Majesty, and he could speak with more knowledge than he might use—it grieved him that Mademoiselle Aubert should be placed in so painful a position.

Sometimes as the two talked Angèle would join them; and then there was a sudden silence, which made her flush with embarrassment, anxiety or anger. In vain did she assume a cold composure, in vain school herself to treat Leicester with a precise courtesy; in vain her heart protested the goodness of De la Forêt and high uprightness of the Queen; the persistent suggestions of the dark Earl worked upon her mind in spite of all. Why had the Queen forbidden her to meet Michel, or write to him, or to receive letters from him? Why had the Queen, who had spoken such gratitude, deserted her? And now even the Duke's Daughter wrote to her no more, sent her no further messages. She felt herself a prisoner, and that the Queen had forgotten her debt.

She took to wandering to that part of the palace

grounds where she could see the windows of the tower her lover inhabited. Her old habit of cheerful talk deserted her, and she brooded. It was long before she heard of the duel between the Seigneur and Lord Leicester—the Duke's Daughter had kept this from her, lest she should be unduly troubled—and when, in anxiety, she went to the house where Lemprière had been quartered, he had gone, none could tell her whither. Buonespoir was now in close confinement, by secret orders of Leicester, and not allowed to walk abroad; and thus with no friend save her father, now so much under the influence of the Earl, she was bitterly solitary. Bravely she fought the growing care and suspicion in her heart; but she was being tried beyond her strength. Her father had urged her to make personal appeal to the Queen; and at times, despite her better judgment, she was on the verge of doing so. Yet what could she say? She could not go to the Queen of England and cry out, like a silly milk-maid: "You have taken my lover—give him back to me!" What proof had she that the Queen wanted her lover? And if she spoke, the impertinence of the suggestion might send back to the fierce Medici that same lover, to lose his head.

Leicester, who now was playing the game as though it were a hazard for states and kingdoms, read the increasing trouble in her face; and waited confidently for the moment when in desperation she would lose her self-control and go to the Queen.

But he did not reckon with the depth of the girl's nature and her true sense of life. Her brain told her that what she was tempted to do she should not; that her only way was to wait; to trust that the Queen of England was as much true woman as Queen, and as much Queen as true woman; and that the one was held

in high equipoise by the other. Besides, Trinity Day would bring the end of it all, and that was not far off. She steeled her will to wait till then, no matter how dark the sky might be.

As time went on, Leicester became impatient. He had not been able to induce M. Aubert to compel Angèle to accept a quiet refuge at Kenilworth; he saw that this plan would not work, and he deployed his mind upon another. If he could but get Angèle to seek De la Forêt in his apartment in the palace, and then bring the matter to Elizabeth's knowledge with sure proof, De la Forêt's doom would be sealed. At great expense, however; for, in order to make the scheme effective, Angèle should visit De la Forêt at night. This would mean the ruin of the girl as well. Still that could be set right; because, once De la Forêt was sent to the Medici the girl's character could be cleared; and, if not, so much the surer would she come at last to his protection. What he had professed in cold deliberation had become in some sense a fact. She had roused in him an eager passion. He might even dare, when De la Forêt was gone, to confess his own action in the matter to the Queen, once she was again within his influence. She had forgiven him more than that in the past, when he had made his own mad devotion to herself excuse for his rashness or misconduct.

He waited opportunity, he arranged all details carefully, he secured the passive agents of his purpose; and when the right day came he acted.

About ten o'clock one night, a half-hour before the closing of the palace gates, when no one could go in or go out save by permit of the Lord Chamberlain, a footman from a surgeon of the palace came to Angèle, bearing a note which read:

Your friend is very ill, and asks for you. Come hither alone; and now, if you would come at all.

Her father was confined to bed with some ailment of the hour, and asleep—it were no good to awaken him. Her mind was at once made up. There was no time to ask permission of the Queen. She knew the surgeon's messengers by sight, this one was in the usual livery, and his master's name was duly signed. In haste she made herself ready, and went forth into the night with the messenger, her heart beating hard, a pitiful anxiety shaking her. Her steps were fleet between the lodge and the palace. They were challenged nowhere, and the surgeon's servant, entering a side door of the palace, led her hastily through gloomy halls and passages where they met no one, though once in a dark corridor some one brushed against her. She wondered why there were no servants to show the way, why the footman carried no torch or candle; but haste and urgency seemed due excuse, and she thought only of Michel, and that she would soon see him—dying, dead perhaps before she could touch his hand! At last they emerged into a lighter and larger hallway, where her guide suddenly paused, and said to Angèle, motioning towards a door:

"Enter. He is there."

For a moment she stood still, scarce able to breathe, her heart hurt her so. It seemed to her as though life itself was arrested. As the servant, without further words, turned and left her, she knocked, opened the door without awaiting a reply, and stepping into semi-darkness, said softly:

"Michel! Michel!"

CHAPTER XVII

At Angèle's entrance a form slowly raised itself on a couch, and a voice, not Michel's, said: "Mademoiselle —by our Lady, 'tis she!"

It was the voice of the Seigneur of Rozel, and Angèle started back amazed.

"You, Monsieur—you!" she gasped. "It was you that sent for me?"

"Send? Not I—I have not lost my manners yet. Rozel at Court is no greater fool than Lemprière in Jersey."

Angèle wrung her hands. "I thought it De la Forêt who was ill. The surgeon said to come quickly."

Lemprière braced himself against the wall, for he was weak, and his fever still high. "Ill?—not he. As sound in body and soul as any man in England. That is a friend, that De la Forêt lover of yours, or I'm no butler to the Queen. He gets leave and brings me here and coaxes me back to life again—with not a wink of sleep for him these five days past till now."

Angèle had drawn nearer, and now stood beside the couch, trembling and fearful, for it came to her mind that she had been made the victim of some foul device. The letter had read: "*Your friend is ill.*" True, the Seigneur was her friend, but he had not sent for her.

"Where is De la Forêt?" she asked quickly.

"Yonder, asleep," said the Seigneur, pointing to a curtain which divided the room from one adjoining.

Angèle ran quickly towards the door, then stopped short. No, she would not waken him. She would go

back at once. She would leave the palace by the way she came. Without a word she turned and went towards the door opening into the hallway. With her hand upon the latch she stopped short again; for she realised that she did not know her way through the passages and corridors, and that she must make herself known to the servants of the palace to obtain guidance and exit. As she stood helpless and confused, the Seigneur called hoarsely: "De la Forêt—De la Forêt!"

Before Angèle could decide upon her course, the curtain of the other room was thrust aside, and De la Forêt entered. He was scarce awake, and he yawned contentedly. He did not see Angèle, but turned towards Lemprière. For once the Seigneur had a burst of inspiration. He saw that Angèle was in the shadow, and that De la Forêt had not observed her. He determined that the lovers should meet alone.

"Your arm, De la Forêt," he grunted. "I'll get me to the bed in yonder room—'tis easier than this couch."

"Two hours ago you could not bear the bed, and must get you to the couch—and now! Seigneur, do you know the weight you are?" he added, laughing, as he stooped, and helping Lemprière gently to his feet, raised him slowly in his arms and went heavily with him to the bedroom. Angèle watched him with a strange thrill of timid admiration and delight. Surely it could not be that Michel—her Michel—could be bought from his allegiance by any influence on earth. There was the same old simple laugh on his lips, as, with chaffing words, he carried the huge Seigneur to the other room. Her heart acquitted him then and there of all blame, past or to come.

"Michel!" she said aloud involuntarily—the call of her spirit which spoke on her lips against her will.

De la Forêt had helped Lemprière to the bed again as he heard his name called, and he stood suddenly still, looking straight before him into space. Angèle's voice seemed ghostly and unreal.

"Michel!" he heard again, and he came forward into the room where she was. Yet once again she said the word scarcely above a whisper, for the look of rapt wonder and apprehension in his manner overcame her. Now he turned towards her, where she stood in the shadow by the door. He saw her, but even yet he did not stir, for she seemed to him still an apparition.

With a little cry she came forward to him. "Michel—help me!" she murmured, and stretched out her hands.

With a cry of joy he took her in his arms and pressed her to his heart. Then a realisation of danger came to him.

"Why did you come?" he asked.

She told him hastily. He heard with astonishment, and then said: "There is some foul trick here. Have you the message?" She handed it to him. "It is the surgeon's writing, verily," he said; "but it is still a trick, for the sick man here is Rozel. I see it all. You and I forbidden to meet—it was a trick to bring you here."

"Oh, let me go!" she cried. "Michel, Michel, take me hence." She turned towards the door.

"The gates are closed," he said, as a cannon boomed on the evening air.

Angèle trembled violently. "Oh, what will come of this?" she cried, in tearful despair.

"Be patient, sweet, and let me think," he answered.

At that moment there came a knocking at the door, then it was thrown open, and there stepped inside the Earl of Leicester, preceded by a page bearing a torch.

"Is Michel de la Forêt within?" he called; then stopped short, as though astonished, seeing Angèle.

"So! so!" he said, with a contemptuous laugh.

Michel de la Forêt's fingers twitched. He quickly stepped in front of Angèle, and answered: "What is your business here, my lord?"

Leicester languorously took off a glove, and seemed to stifle a yawn in it; then said: "I came to take you into my service, to urge upon you for your own sake to join my troops, going upon duty in the North; for I fear that if you stay here the Queen Mother of France will have her way. But I fear I am too late. A man who has sworn himself into *service d'amour* has no time for *service de la guerre*."

"I will gladly give an hour from any service I may follow to teach the Earl of Leicester that he is less a swordsman than a trickster."

Leicester flushed, but answered coolly: "I can understand your chagrin. You should have locked your door. It is the safer custom." He bowed lightly towards Angèle. "You have not learned our English habits of discretion, Monsieur de la Forêt. I would only do you service. I appreciate your choler. I should be no less indignant. So, in the circumstances, I will see that the gates are opened,—of course you did not realise the flight of time,—and I will take Mademoiselle to her lodgings. You may rely on my discretion. I am wholly at your service—*tout à vous*, as who should say in your charming language."

The insolence was so veiled in perfect outward courtesy that it must have seemed impossible for De la Forêt to reply in terms equal to the moment. He had, however, no need to reply, for the door of the room suddenly opened, and two pages stepped inside with torches.

They were followed by a gentleman in scarlet and gold, who said, "The Queen!" and stepped aside.

An instant afterwards Elizabeth, with the Duke's Daughter, entered.

The three dropped upon their knees, and Elizabeth waved without the pages and the gentleman-in-waiting.

When the doors closed, the Queen eyed the three kneeling figures, and as her glance fell on Leicester a strange glitter came into her eyes. She motioned all to rise, and with a hand upon the arm of the Duke's Daughter, said to Leicester:

"What brings the Earl of Leicester here?"

"I came to urge upon Monsieur the wisdom of holding to the Sword and leaving the Book to the butter-fingered religious. Your Majesty needs good soldiers."

He bowed, but not low, and it was clear he was bent upon a struggle. He was confounded by the Queen's presence, he could not guess why she should have come; and that she was prepared for what she saw was clear.

"And brought an eloquent pleader with you?" She made a scornful gesture towards Angèle.

"Nay, your Majesty; the lady's zeal outran my own, and crossed the threshold first."

The Queen's face wore a look that Leicester had never seen on it before, and he had observed it in many moods.

"You found the lady here, then?"

"With Monsieur alone. Seeing she was placed unfortunately, I offered to escort her hence to her father. But your Majesty came upon the moment."

There was a ring of triumph in Leicester's voice. No doubt, by some chance, the Queen had become aware of Angèle's presence, he thought. Fate had forestalled the letter he had already written on this matter and meant to send her within the hour. Chance had played

into his hands with perfect suavity. The Queen, less woman now than Queen, enraged by the information got he knew not how, had come at once to punish the gross breach of her orders and a dark misconduct—so he thought.

The Queen's look, as she turned it on Angèle, apparently had in it what must have struck terror to even a braver soul than that of the helpless Huguenot girl.

"So it is thus you spend the hours of night? God's faith, but you are young to be so wanton!" she cried in a sharp voice. "Get you from my sight and out of my kingdom as fast as horse and ship may carry you—as feet may bear you." Leicester's face lighted to hear.

"Your high Majesty," pleaded the girl, dropping on her knees, "I am innocent. As God lives, I am innocent."

"The man, then, only is guilty?" the Queen rejoined with scorn. "Is it innocent to be here at night, my palace gates shut, with your lover—alone?" Leicester laughed at the words.

"Your Majesty, oh, your gracious Majesty, hear me. We were not alone—not alone—"

There was a rustle of curtains, a heavy footstep, and Lemprière of Rozel staggered into the room. De la Forêt ran to help him, and throwing an arm around him, almost carried him towards the couch. Lemprière, however, slipped from De la Forêt's grasp to his knees on the floor before the Queen.

"Not alone, your high and sacred Majesty, I am here—I have been here through all. I was here when Mademoiselle came, brought hither by trick of some knave not fit to be your immortal Majesty's subject. I speak the truth, for I am butler to your Majesty and no liar. I am Lemprière of Rozel."

No man's self-control could meet such a surprise

without wavering. Leicester was confounded, for he had not known that Lemprière was housed with De la Forêt. For a moment he could do naught but gaze at Lemprière. Then, as the Seigneur suddenly swayed and would have fallen, the instinct of effective courtesy, strong in him, sent him with arms outstretched to lift him up. Together, without a word, he and De la Forêt carried him to the couch and laid him down.

That single act saved Leicester's life. There was something so naturally (though, in truth, it was so hypocritically) kind in the way he sprang to his enemy's assistance that an old spirit of fondness stirred in the Queen's breast, and she looked strangely at him. When, however, they had disposed of Lemprière and Leicester had turned again towards her, she said:

"Did you think I had no loyal and true gentlemen at my Court, my lord? Did you think my leech would not serve me as fair as he would serve the Earl of Leicester? You have not bought us all, Robert Dudley, who have bought and sold so long. The good leech did your bidding and sent your note to the lady; but there your bad play ended and Fate's began. A rabbit's brains, Leicester—and a rabbit's end. Fate has the brains you need."

Leicester's anger burst forth now under the lash of ridicule. "I cannot hope to win when your Majesty plays Fate in caricature."

With a little gasp of rage Elizabeth leaned over and slapped his face with her long glove. "Death of my life, but I who made you do unmake you!" she cried.

He dropped his hand on his sword. "If you were but a man, and not—" he said, then stopped short, for there was that in the Queen's face which changed his purpose.

Anger was shaking her, but there were tears in her

eyes. The woman in her was stronger than the Queen. It was nothing to her at this moment that she might have his life as easily as she had struck his face with her glove; this man had once shown the better part of himself to her, and the memory of it shamed her for his own sake now. She made a step towards the door, then turned and spoke:

"My Lord, I have no palace and no ground wherein your footstep will not be trespass. Pray you, remember."

She turned towards Lemprière, who lay on his couch faint and panting. "For you, my Lord of Rozel, I wish you better health, though you have lost it somewhat in a good cause."

Her glance fell on De la Forêt. Her look softened. "I will hear you preach next Sunday, sir."

There was an instant's pause, and then she said to Angèle, with gracious look and in a low voice: "You have heard from me that calumny which the innocent never escape. To try you I neglected you these many days; to see your nature even more truly than I knew it, I accused you but now. You might have been challenged first by one who could do you more harm than Elizabeth of England, whose office is to do good, not evil. Nets are spread for those whose hearts are simple, and your feet have been caught. Be thankful that we understand; and know that Elizabeth is your loving friend. You have had trials—I have kept you in suspense—there has been trouble for us all; but we are better now; our minds are more content; so all may be well, please God! You will rest this night with our lady-dove here, and to-morrow early you shall return in peace to your father. You have a good friend in our cousin." She made a gentle motion towards the

Duke's Daughter. "She has proved it so. In my leech she has a slave. To her you owe this help in time of need. She hath wisdom, too, and we must listen to her, even as I have done this day."

She inclined her head towards the door. Leicester opened it, and as she passed out she gave him one look which told him that his game was lost, if not for ever, yet for time uncertain and remote. "You must not blame the leech, my lord," she said, suddenly turning back. "The Queen of England has first claim on the duty of her subjects. They serve me for love; you they help at need as time-servers."

She stepped on, then paused again and looked back. "Also I forbid fighting betwixt you," she said, in a loud voice, looking at De la Forêt and Leicester.

Without further sign or look, she moved on. Close behind came Angèle and the Duke's Daughter, and Leicester followed at some distance.

CHAPTER XVIII

Not far from the palace, in a secluded place hidden by laburnum, roses, box and rhododendrons, there was a quaint and beautiful retreat. High up on all sides of a circle of green the flowering trees and shrubs interlaced their branches, and the grass, as smooth as velvet, was of such a note as soothed the eye and quieted the senses. In one segment of the verdant circle was a sort of open bower made of poles, up which roses climbed and hung across in gay festoons; and in two other segments mossy banks made resting-places. Here, in days gone by, when Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, first drew the eyes of his Queen upon him, Elizabeth came to listen to his vows of allegiance, which swam in floods of passionate devotion to her person. Christopher Hatton, Sir Henry Lee, the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Sussex, a race of gallants, had knelt upon this pleasant sward. Here they had declared a devotion that, historically platonic, had a personal passion which, if rewarded by no personal requital, must have been an expensive outlay of patience and emotion.

But those days had gone. Robert Dudley had advanced far past his fellows, had locked himself into the chamber of the Queen's confidence, had for long proved himself necessary to her, had mingled deference and admiration with an air of monopoly, and had then advanced to an air of possession, of suggested control. Then had begun his decline. England and England's Queen could have but one ruler, and upon an occasion in the past Elizabeth made it clear by the words she

used: "God's death, my Lord, I have wished you well; but my favour is not so locked up for you that others shall not partake thereof; and, if you think to rule here, I will take a course to see you forthcoming. I will have here but one mistress and no master."

In these words she but declared what was the practice of her life, the persistent passion of her rule. The world could have but one sun, and every man or woman who sought its warmth must be a sun-worshipper. There could be no divided faith, no luminaries in the sky save those which lived by borrowed radiance.

Here in this bright theatre of green and roses poets had sung the praises of this Queen to her unblushing and approving face; here ladies thrice as beautiful as she had begged her to tell them the secret of her beauty, so much greater than that of any living woman; and she was pleased even when she knew they flattered but to gain her smile—it was the tribute that power exacts. The place was a cenotaph of past romance and pleasure. Every leaf of every tree and flower had impressions of glories, of love, ambition and intrigue, of tears and laughter, of joyousness and ruin. Never a spot in England where so much had been said and done, so far-reaching in effect and influence. But its glory was departed, its day was done, it was a place of dreams and memories: the Queen came here no more. Many years had withered since she had entered this charmed spot; and that it remained so fine was but evidence of the care of those to whom she had given strict orders seven years past, that in and out of season it must be ever kept as it had erstwhile been. She had never entered the place since the day the young Marquis of Wessex, whom she had imprisoned for marrying secretly and without her consent, on his release came here, and, with

a concentrated bitterness and hate, had told her such truths as she never had heard from man or woman since she was born. He had impeached her in such cold and murderous terms as must have made wince even a woman with no pride. To Elizabeth it was gall and wormwood. When he at last demanded the life of the young wife who had died in enforced seclusion, because she had married the man she loved, Elizabeth was so confounded that she hastily left the place, saying no word in response. This attack had been so violent, so deadly, that she had seemed unnerved, and forbore to command him to the Tower or to death.

"You, in whose breast love never stirred, deny the right to others whom God blessed with it," he cried. "Envious of mortal happiness that dare exist outside your will or gift, you sunder and destroy. You, in whose hands was power to give joy, gave death. What you have sown you shall reap. Here on this spot I charge you with high treason, with treachery to the people over whom you have power as a trust, which trust you have made a scourge."

With such words as these he had assailed her, and for the first time in her life she had been confounded. In safety he had left the place, and taken his way to Italy, from which he had never returned, though she had sent for him in kindness. Since that day Elizabeth had never come hither; and by-and-by none of her Court came save the Duke's Daughter, and her fool, who both made it their resort. Here the fool came upon the Friday before Trinity Day, bringing with him Lemprière and Buonespoir, to whom he had much attached himself.

It was a day of light and warmth, and the place was

like a basket of roses. Having seen the two serving-men dispose, in a convenient place, the refreshment which Lemprière's appetite compelled, the fool took command of the occasion and made the two sit upon a bank, while he prepared the repast.

Strangest of the notable trio was the dwarfish fool with his shaggy black head, twisted mouth, and watchful, wandering eye, whose foolishness was but the flaunting cover of shrewd observation and trenchant vision. Going where he would, and saying what he listed, now in the Queen's inner chamber, then in the midst of the Council, unconsidered, and the butt of all, he paid for his bed and bounty by shooting shafts of foolery which as often made his listeners shrink as caused their laughter. The Queen he called Delicio, and Leicester, Obligato—as one who piped to another's dance. He had taken to Buonespoir at the first glance, and had frequented him, and Lemprière had presently been added to his favour. He had again and again been messenger between them, as also of late between Angèle and Michel, whose case he viewed from a stand-point of great cheerfulness, and treated them as children playing on the sands—as, indeed, he did the Queen and all near to her. But Buonespoir, the pirate, was to him reality and the actual, and he called him Bono Publico. At first Lemprière, ever jealous of his importance, was inclined to treat him with elephantine condescension; but he could not long hold out against the boon archness of the jester, and he collapsed suddenly into as close a friendship as that between himself and Buonespoir.

A rollicking spirt was his own fullest stock-in-trade, and it won him like a brother.

So it was that here, in the very bosom of the forest, lured by the pipe the fool played, Lemprière burst forth

into song, in one hand a bottle of canary, in the other a handful of comfits:

"Duke William was a Norman
(*Spread the sail to the breeze!*)
That did to England ride;
At Hastings by the Channel
(*Drink the wine to the lees!*)
Our Harold the Saxon died.
If there be no cakes from Normandy,
There'll be more ale in England!"

"Well sung, nobility, and well said," cried Buonespoir, with a rose by the stem in his mouth, one hand beating time to the music, the other clutching a flagon of muscadella; "for the Normans are kings in England, and there's drink in plenty at the Court of our Lady Duchess."

"Delicio shall never want while I have a penny of hers to spend," quoth the fool, feeling for another tune.

"Should conspirators prevail, and the damnedest be, she hath yet the Manor of Rozel and my larder," urged Lemprière, with a splutter through the canary.

"That shall be only when the Fifth wind comes—it is so ordained, Nuncio!" said the fool blinking.

Buonespoir set down his flagon. "And what wind is the Fifth wind?" he asked, scratching his bullet-head, his child-like, widespread eyes smiling the question.

"There be now four winds—the North wind and his sisters, the East, the West, and South. When God sends a Fifth wind, then conspirators shall wear crowns. Till then Delicio shall sow and I shall reap, as is Heaven's will."

Lemprière lay back and roared with laughter. "Before Belial, there never was such another as thou, fool.

Conspirators shall die and not prevail, for a man may not marry his sister, and the North wind shall have no progeny. So there shall be no Fifth wind."

"Proved, proved," cried the fool. "The North wind shall go whistle for a mate—there shall be no Fifth wind. So, Delicio shall still sail by the compass, and shall still compass all, and yet be compassed by none; for it is written, Who compasseth Delicio existeth not."

Buonespoir watched a lark soaring, as though its flight might lead him through the fool's argument clearly. Lemprière closed his eye, and struggled with it, his lips outpursed, his head sunk on his breast. Suddenly his eyes opened, he brought the bottle of canary down with a thud on the turf. "'Fore Michael and all angels, I have it, fool; I travel, I conceive. De Carteret of St. Ouen's must have gone to the block ere conceiving so. I must conceive thus of the argument. He who compasseth the Queen existeth not, for compassing, he dieth."

"So it is by the hour-glass and the fortune told in the porringer. You have conceived like a man, Nuncio."

"And conspirators, I conceive, must die, so long as there be honest men to slay them," rejoined the Seigneur.

"Must only honest men slay conspirators? Oh, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!" wheezed Buonespoir with a grin. He placed his hand upon his head in self-pity. "Buonespoir, art thou damned by muscadella?" he murmured.

"But thou art purged of the past, Bono Publico," answered the fool. "Since Delicio hath looked upon thee she hath shredded the Tyburn lien upon thee—thou art flushed like a mountain spring; and conspirators shall fall down by thee if thou, *passant*, dost fall

by conspirators in the way. Bono Publico, thou shalt live by good company. Henceforth contraband shall be spurned and the book of grace opened."

Buonespoir's eyes laughed like a summer sky, but he scratched his head and turned over the rose-stem in his mouth reflectively. "So be it, then, if it must be; but yesterday the Devon sea-sweeper, Francis Drake, overhauled me in my cottage, coming from the Queen, who had infused him of me. 'I have heard of you from a high masthead,' said he. 'If the Spanish main allure you, come with me. There be galleons yonder still; they shall cough up doubloons.' 'It hath a sound of piracy,' said I. 'I am expurgated. My name is written on clean paper now, blessed be the name of the Queen!' 'Tut, tut, Buonesperado,' laughed he, 'you shall forget that Tyburn is not a fable if you care to have doubloons reminted at the Queen's mint. It is meet Spanish Philip's head be molted to oblivion, and Elizabeth's raised, so that good silver be purged of Popish alloy.' But that I had sworn by the little finger of St. Peter when the moon was full, never to leave the English seas, I also would have gone with Drake of Devon this day. It is a man and a master of men that Drake of Devon."

"'Tis said that when a man hath naught left but life, and hath treated his honour like a poor relation, he goes to the Spanish main with Drake and Grenville," said Lemprière.

"Then must Obligato go, for he hath such credentials," said the fool, blowing thistle-down in the air. "Yesterday was no Palm Sunday to Leicester. Delicio's head was high. 'Imperial Majesty,' quoth Obligato, his knees upon the rushes, 'take my life but send me not forth into darkness where I shall see my Queen

no more. By the light of my Queen's eyes have I walked, and pains of hell are my Queen's displeasure.' 'Methinks thy humbleness is tardy,' quoth Delicio. 'No cock shall crow by my nest,' said she. 'And, by the mantle of Elijah, I am out with sour faces and men of phlegm and rheum. I will be gay once more. So get thee gone to Kenilworth, and stray not from it on thy peril. Take thy malaise with thee, and I shall laugh again.' Behold he goeth. So that was the end of Obligato, and now cometh another tune."

"She hath good cheer?" asked Lemprière eagerly.

"I have never seen Delicio smile these seven years as she smiled to-day; and when she kissed Amicitia I sent for my confessor and made my will. Delicio hath come to spring-time, and the voice of the turtle is in her ear."

"Amicitia—and who is Amicitia?" asked Lemprière, well flushed with wine.

"She who hath brought Obligato to the diminuendo and finale," answered the fool; "even she who hath befriended the Huguenottine of the black eyes."

"Ah, she, the Duke's Daughter—v'la, that is a flower of a lady! Did she not say that my jerkin fitted featly when I did act as butler to her adorable Majesty three months syne? She hath no mate in the world save Mademoiselle Aubert, whom I brought hither to honour and to fame."

"To honour and fame, was it—but by the hill of desperandum, Nuncio," said the fool, prodding him with his stick of bells.

"'Desperandum'! I know not Latin; it amazes me," said Lemprière, waving a lofty hand.

"She—the Huguenottine—was a-mazed also, and from the maze was played by Obligato."

"How so! how so!" cried the Seigneur, catching

at his meaning. "Did Leicester waylay and siege? 'Sblood, had I known this, I'd have broached him and swallowed him even on crutches."

"She made him raise the siege, she turned his own guns upon him, and in the end hath driven him hence."

By rough questioning Lemprière got from the fool by snatches the story of the meeting in the maze, which had left Leicester standing with the jester's ribboned bells in his hand. Then the Seigneur got to his feet, and hugged the fool, bubbling with laughter.

"By all the blood of all the saints, I will give thee burial in my own grave when all's done," he spluttered; "for there never was such fooling, never such a wise fool come since Confucius and the Khan. Good be with you, fool, and thanks be for such a lady. Thanks be also for the Duke's Daughter. Ah, how she laid Leicester out! She washed him up the shore like behemoth, and left him gaping."

Buonespoir intervened. "And what shall come of it? What shall be the end? The *Honeyflower* lies at anchor—there be three good men in waiting, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and—"

The Seigneur interrupted. "There's little longer waiting. All's well! Her high hereditary Majesty smiled on me when she gave Leicester congé and fiery quittance. She hath me in favour, and all shall be well with Michel and Angèle. O fool, fool, fantastic and flavoured fool, sing me a song of good content, for if this business ends not with crescendo and bell-ringing, I am no butler to the Queen nor keep good company!"

Seating themselves upon the mossy bank, their backs to the westward sun, the fool peered into the green shadows and sang with a soft melancholy an ancient song that another fool had sung to the first Tudor:

"When blows the wind and drives the sleet,
And all the trees droop down;
When all the world is sad, 'tis meet
Good company be known:
And in my heart good company
Sits by the fire and sings to me.

"When warriors return, and one
That went returns no more;
When dusty is the road we run,
And garners have no store;
One ingle-nook right warm shall be
Where my heart hath good company.

"When man shall flee and woman fail,
And folly mock and hope deceive,
Let cowards beat the breast and wail,
I'll homeward hie; I will not grieve:
I'll draw the blind, I'll there set free
My heart's beloved boon company.

"When kings shall favour, ladies call
My service to their side;
When roses grow upon the wall
Of life, with love inside;
I'll get me home with joy to be
In my heart's own good company!"

"Oh, fool, oh, beneficent fool, well done! 'Tis a song for a man—'twould shame De Carteret of St. Ouen's to his knees," cried Lemprière.

"Oh, benignant fool, well done!—'twould draw me from my meals," said a voice behind the three; and, turning hastily about, they saw, smiling and applausive, the Duke's Daughter. Beside her was Angèle.

The three got to their feet, and each made obeisance after his kind—Buonespoir ducking awkwardly, his blue eyes bulging with pleasure, Lemprière swelling

with vanity and spreading wide acknowledgment of their presence, the fool condescending a wave of welcome.

"Oh! abundant Amicitia!" cried the fool to the Duke's Daughter, "thou art saved by so doing. So get thee to thanksgiving and God's mercy."

"Wherefore am I saved by being drawn from my meals by thy music, fool?" she asked, linking her arm in Angèle's.

"Because thou art more enamoured of lampreys than of man; and it is written that thou shalt love thy fellow man, and he that loveth not is lost: therefore thou art lost if thou lingerest at meals."

"Is it so, then? And this lady—what thinkest thou? Must she also abstain and seek good company?"

"No, verily, Amicitia, for she is good company itself, and so she may sleep in the larder and have no fear."

"And what think you—shall she be happy? Shall she have gifts of fate?"

"Discriminately so, Amicitia. She shall have souvenirs and no suspicions of Fate. But she shall not linger here, for all lingerers in Delicio's Court are spied upon—not for their soul's good. She shall go hence, and—"

"Ay, princely lady, she shall go hence," interposed Lemprière, who had panted to speak, and could bear silence no longer. "Her high Majesty will kiss her on the brow, and in Jersey Isle she shall blossom and bloom and know bounty—or never more shall I have privilege and *perquage*."

He lumbered forward and kissed Angèle's hand as though conferring distinction, but with great generosity. "I said that all should go well, and so it shall. Rozel shall prevail. The Queen knows on what rock to build, as I made warrant for her, and will still do so."

His vanity was incorrigible, but through it ran so child-like a spirit that it bred friendship and repulsed not. The Duke's Daughter pressed the arm of Angèle, who replied:

"Indeed it has been so according to your word, and we are—I am—shall ever be beholden. In storm you have been with us, so true a pilot and so brave a sailor; and if we come to port and the quiet shore, there shall be spread a feast of remembrance which shall never grow cold, Seigneur."

> "One ingle-nook right warm shall be
> Where my heart hath good company,"

sang the fool, and catching by the arm Buonespoir, who ducked his head in farewell, ran him into the greenwood. Angèle came forward as if to stay Buonespoir, but stopped short reflectively. As she did so, the Duke's Daughter whispered quickly into Lemprière's ear.

Swelling with pride he nodded, and said: "I will reach him and discover myself to him, and bring him, if he stray, most undoubted and infallible lady," and with an air of mystery he made a heavily respectful exit.

Left alone, the two ladies seated themselves in the bower of roses, and for a moment were silent. Presently the Duke's Daughter laughed aloud.

"In what seas of dear conceit swims your leviathan Seigneur, heart's-ease?"

Angèle stole a hand into the cool palm of the other.

"He was builded for some lonely sea all his own. Creation cheated him. But God give me ever such friends as he, and I shall indeed 'have good company' and fear no issue." She sighed.

"Remains there still a fear? Did you not have good promise in the Queen's words *that night?*"

"Ay, so it seemed, and so it seemed before—on May Day, and yet—"

"And yet she banished you, and tried you, and kept you heart-sick? Sweet, know you not how bitter a thing it is to owe a debt of love to one whom we have injured? So it was with her. The Queen is not a saint, but very woman. Marriage she hath ever contemned and hated; men she hath desired to keep her faithful and impassioned servitors. So does power blind us. And the braver the man, the more she would have him in her service, at her feet, the centre of the world."

"I had served her in a crisis, an hour of peril. Was naught due me?"

The Duke's Daughter drew her close. "She never meant but that all should be well. And because you had fastened on her feelings as never I have seen another of your sex, so for the moment she resented it; and because De la Forêt was yours—ah, if you had each been naught to the other, how easy it would have run! Do you not understand?"

"Nay, then, and yea, then—and I put it from me. See, am I not happy now? Upon your friendship I build."

"Sweet, I did what I could. Leicester filled her ears with poison every day, mixed up your business and great affairs with France, sought to convey that you both were not what you are; until at last I countermarched him." She laughed merrily. "Ay, I can laugh now, but it was all hanging by a thread, when my leech sent his letter that brought you to the palace. It had grieved me that I might not seek you, or write to you in all those sad days; but the only way to save you was

by keeping the Queen's command; for she had known of Leicester's visits to you, of your meeting in the maze, and she was set upon it that alone, all alone, you should be tried to the last vestige of your strength. If you had failed—"

"If I had failed—" Angèle closed her eyes and shuddered. "I had not cared for myself, but Michel—"

"If you had *failed*, there had been no need to grieve for Michel. He then had not grieved for thee. But see, the wind blows fair, and in my heart I have no fear of the end. You shall go hence in peace. This morning the Queen was happier than I have seen her these many years: a light was in her eye brighter than showeth to the Court. She talked of this place, recalled the hours spent here, spoke even softly of Leicester. And that gives me warrant for the future. She has relief in his banishment, and only recalls older and happier days when, if her cares were no greater, they were borne by the buoyancy of girlhood and youth. Of days spent here she talked until mine own eyes went blind. She said it was a place for lovers, and if she knew any two lovers who were true lovers, and had been long parted, she would send them here."

"There be two true lovers, and they have been long parted," murmured Angèle.

"But she commanded these lovers not to meet till Trinity Day, and she brooks not disobedience even in herself. How could she disobey her own commands? But"—her eyes were on the greenwood and the path that led into the circle—"but she would shut her eyes to-day, and let the world move on without her, let lovers thrive, and birds be nesting without heed or hap. Disobedience shall thrive when the Queen connives at it—and so I leave you to your disobedience, sweet."

With a laugh she sprang to her feet, and ran. Amazed and bewildered Angèle gazed after her. As she stood looking she heard her name called softly.

Turning, she saw Michel. They were alone.

CHAPTER XIX

When De la Forêt and Angèle saw the Queen again it was in the royal chapel.

Perhaps the longest five minutes of M. de la Forêt's life were those in which he waited the coming of the Queen on that Trinity Sunday which was to decide his fate. When he saw Elizabeth enter the chapel his eyes swam, till the sight of them was lost in the blur of colour made by the motions of gorgeously apparelled courtiers and the people of the household. When the Queen had taken her seat and all was quiet, he struggled with himself to put on such a front of simple boldness as he would wear upon day of battle. The sword the Queen had given him was at his side, and his garb was still that of a gentleman, not of a Huguenot minister such as Elizabeth in her grim humour, and to satisfy her bond with France, would make of him this day.

The brown of his face had paled in the weeks spent in the palace and in waiting for this hour; anxiety had toned the ruddy vigour of his bearing; but his figure was the figure of a soldier, and his hand that of a strong man. He shook a little as he bowed to her Majesty, but that passed, and when at last his eye met that of the Duke's Daughter he grew steady; for she gave him as plainly as though her tongue spoke, a message from Angèle. Angèle herself he did not see—she was kneeling in an obscure corner, her father's hand in hers, all the passion of her life pouring out in prayer.

De la Forêt drew himself up with an iron will. No nobler figure of a man ever essayed to preach the Word,

and so Elizabeth thought; and she repented of the bitter humour which had set this trial as his chance of life in England and his freedom from the hand of Catherine. The man bulked larger in her eyes than he had ever done, and she struggled with herself to keep the vow she had made to the Duke's Daughter the night that Angèle had been found in De la Forêt's rooms. He had been the immediate cause, fated or accidental, of the destined breach between Leicester and herself; he had played a significant part in her own life. Glancing at her courtiers, she saw that none might compare with him, the form and being of calm boldness and courage. She sighed she knew scarce why.

When De la Forêt first opened his mouth and essayed to call the worshippers to prayer, no words came forth —only a dry whisper. Some ladies simpered, and more than one courtier laughed silently. Michel saw, and his face flamed up. But he laid a hand on himself, and a moment afterwards his voice came forth, clear, musical, and resonant, speaking simple words, direct and unlacquered sentences, passionately earnest withal. He stilled the people to a unison of sentiment, none the less interested and absorbed because it was known that he had been the cause of the great breach between the Queen and the favourite. Ere he had spoken far, flippant gallants had ceased to flutter handkerchiefs, to move their swords idly upon the floor.

He took for his text: "*Stand and search for the old paths.*" The beginning of all systems of religion, the coming of the Nazarene, the rise and growth of Christianity, the martyrdoms of the early church, the invasion of the truth by false doctrine, the abuses of the Church, the Reformation, the martyrdom of the Huguenots for the return to the early principles of Chris-

tianity, the "search for the old paths," he set forth in a tone generous but not fiery, presently powerful and searching, yet not declamatory. At the last he raised the sword that hung by his side, and the Book that lay before him, and said:

"And what matter which it is we wield—this steel that strikes for God, or this Book which speaks of Him? For the Book is the sword of the Spirit, and the sword is the life of humanity; for all faith must be fought for, and all that is has been won by strife. But the paths wherein ye go to battle must be the old paths; your sword shall be your staff by day, and the Book your lantern by night. That which ye love ye shall teach, and that which ye teach ye shall defend; and if your love be a true love your teaching shall be a great teaching, and your sword a strong sword which none may withstand. It shall be the pride of sovereign and of people; and so neither 'height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.'"

Ere he had ended, some of the ladies were overcome, the eyes of the Duke's Daughter were full of tears, and Elizabeth said audibly, when he ceased speaking: "On my soul, I have no bishop with a tongue like his. Would that my Lord of Ely were here to learn how truth should be spoke. Henceforth my bishops shall first be Camisards."

Of that hour's joyful business the Queen wrote thus to the Medici before the day was done:

Cancelling all other letters on the matter, this M. de la Forêt shall stay in my kingdom. I may not be the headsman of one of my faith—as eloquent a preacher as he was a brave soldier. Abiding by the strict terms of our treaty with my brother of

France, he shall stay with us in peace, and in our own care. He hath not the eloquence of a Knox, but he hath the true thing in him, and that speaks.

To the Duke's Daughter the Queen said: "On my soul, he shall be married instantly, or my ladies will carry him off and murder him for love."

And so it was that the heart of Elizabeth the Queen warmed again and dearly towards two Huguenot exiles, and showed that in doing justice she also had not so sour a heart towards her sex as was set down to her credit. Yet she made one further effort to keep De la Forêt in her service. When Michel, once again, declined, dwelt earnestly on his duty towards the widow of his dead chief, and begged leave to share her exile in Jersey, Elizabeth said: "On my soul, but I did not think there was any man on earth so careless of princes' honours!"

To this De la Forêt replied that he had given his heart and life to one cause, and since Montgomery had lost all, even life, the least Michel de la Forêt could do was to see that the woman who loved him be not unprotected in the world. Also, since he might not at this present fight for the cause, he could speak for it; and he thanked the Queen of England for having shown him his duty. All that he desired was to be quiet for a space somewhere in "her high Majesty's good realm," till his way was clear to him.

"You would return to Jersey, then, with our friend of Rozel?" Elizabeth said, with a gesture towards Lemprière, who, now recovered from his wound, was present at the audience.

De la Forêt inclined his head. "If it be your high Majesty's pleasure."

And Lemprière of Rozel said: "He would return with myself your noble Majesty's friend before all the world, and Buonespoir his ship the *Honeyflower*."

Elizabeth's lips parted in a smile, for she was warmed with the luxury of doing good, and she answered:

"I know not what the end of this will be, whether our loyal Lemprière will become a pirate or Buonespoir a butler to my Court; but it is too pretty a hazard to forego in a world of chance. By the rood, but I have never, since I sat on my father's throne, seen black so white as I have done this past three months. You shall have your Buonespoir, good Rozel; but if he plays pirate any more—tell him this from his Queen—upon an English ship, I will have his head, if I must needs send Drake of Devon to overhaul him."

That same hour the Queen sent for Angèle, and by no leave, save her own, arranged the wedding-day, and ordained that it should take place at Southampton, whither the Comtesse de Montgomery had come on her way to Greenwich to plead for the life of Michel de la Forêt, and to beg Elizabeth to relieve her poverty. Both of which things Elizabeth did, as the annals of her life record.

After Elizabeth—ever self-willed—had declared her way about the marriage ceremony, looking for no reply save that of silent obedience, she made Angèle sit at her feet and tell her whole story again from first to last. They were alone, and Elizabeth showed to this young refugee more of her own heart than any other woman had ever seen. Not by words alone, for she made no long story; but once she stooped and kissed Angèle upon the cheek, and once her eyes filled up with tears, and they dropped upon her lap unheeded. All the devotion shown herself as a woman had come to naught;

and it may be that this thought stirred in her now. She remembered how Leicester and herself had parted, and how she was denied all those soft resources of regret which were the right of the meanest women in her realm. For, whatever she might say to her Parliament and people, she knew that all was too late—that she would never marry and that she must go childless and uncomforted to her grave. Years upon years of delusion of her people, of sacrifice to policy, had at last become a self-delusion, to which her eyes were not full opened yet—she sought to shut them tight. But these refugees, coming at the moment of her own struggle, had changed her heart from an ever-growing bitterness to human sympathy. When Angèle had ended her tale once more, the Queen said:

"God knows, ye shall not linger in my Court. Such lives have no place here. Get you back to my Isle of Jersey, where ye may live in peace. Here all is noise, self-seeking and time-service. If ye twain are not happy I will say the world should never have been made."

Before they left Greenwich Palace—M. Aubert and Angèle, De la Forêt, Lemprière, and Buonespoir—the Queen made Michel de la Forêt the gift of a chaplaincy to the Crown. To Monsieur Aubert she gave a small pension, and in Angèle's hands she placed a deed of dower worthy of a generosity greater than her own.

At Southampton, Michel and Angèle were married by royal license, and with the Comtesse de Montgomery set sail in Buonespoir's boat, the *Honeyflower*, which brought them safe to St. Helier's, in the Isle of Jersey.

CHAPTER XX

Followed several happy years for Michel and Angèle. The protection of the Queen herself, the chaplaincy she had given De la Forêt, the friendship with the Governor of the island, and the boisterous tales Lemprière had told of those days at Greenwich Palace quickened the sympathy and held the interest of the people at large; while the simple lives of the two won their way into the hearts of all, even, at last, to that of De Carteret of St. Ouen's. It was Angèle herself who brought the two Seigneurs together at her own good table; and it needed all her tact on that occasion to prevent the ancient foes from drinking all the wine in her cellar.

There was no parish in Jersey that did not know their goodness, but mostly in the parishes of St. Martin's and Rozel were their faithful labours done. From all parts of the island people came to hear Michel speak, though that was but seldom; and when he spoke he always wore the sword the Queen had given him, and used the Book he had studied in her palace. It was to their home that Buonespoir the pirate—faithful to his promise to the Queen that he would harry English ships no more—came wounded, after an engagement with a French boat sent to capture him, carried thither by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It was there he died, after having drunk a bottle of St. Ouen's muscadella, brought secretly to him by his unchanging friend, Lemprière, so hastening the end.

The Comtesse de Montgomery, who lived in a cottage near by, came constantly to the little house on the hill-

side by Rozel Bay. She had never loved her own children more than she did the brown-haired child with the deep-blue eyes, which was the one pledge of the great happiness of Michel and Angèle.

Soon after this child was born, M. Aubert had been put to rest in St. Martin's churchyard, and there his tombstone might be seen so late as a hundred years ago. So things went softly by for seven years, and then Madame de Montgomery journeyed to England, on invitation of the Queen and to better fortune, and Angèle and De la Forêt were left to their quiet life in Jersey. Sometimes this quiet was broken by bitter news from France, of fresh persecution, and fresh struggle on the part of the Huguenots. Thereafter for hours, sometimes for days, De la Forêt would be lost in sorrowful and restless meditation; and then he fretted against his peaceful calling and his uneventful life. But the gracious hand of his wife and the eyes of his child led him back to cheerful ways again.

Suddenly one day came the fearful news from England that the plague had broken out, and that thousands were dying. The flight from London was like the flight of the children of Israel into the desert. The dead-carts filled with decaying bodies rattled through the foul streets, to drop their horrid burdens into the great pit at Aldgate; the bells of London tolled all day and all night for the passing of human souls. Hundreds of homes, isolated because of a victim of the plague found therein, became ghastly breeding-places of the disease, and then silent, disgusting graves. If a man shivered in fear, or staggered from weakness, or for very hunger turned sick, he was marked as a victim, and despite his protests was huddled away with the real victims to die the awful death. From every church, where

clergy were left to pray, went up the cry for salvation from "plague, pestilence, and famine." Scores of ships from Holland and from France lay in the Channel, not allowed to touch the shores of England, nor permitted to return whence they came. On the very day that news of this reached Jersey, came a messenger from the Queen of England for Michel de la Forêt to hasten to her Court for that she had need of him, and it was a need which would bring him honour. Even as the young officer who brought the letter handed it to De la Forêt in the little house on the hill-side above Rozel Bay, he was taken suddenly ill, and fell at the Camisard's feet.

De la Forêt straightway raised him in his arms. He called to his wife, but, bidding her not come near, he bore the doomed man away to the lonely Ecréhos Rocks lying within sight of their own doorway. Suffering no one to accompany him, he carried the sick man to the boat which had brought the Queen's messenger to Rozel Bay. The sailors of the vessel fled, and alone De la Forêt set sail for the Ecréhos.

There upon the black rocks the young man died, and Michel buried him in the shore-bed of the Maître Ile. Then, after two days—for he could bear suspense no longer—he set sail for Jersey. Upon that journey there is no need to dwell. Any that hath ever loved a woman and a child must understand. A deep fear held him all the way, and when he stepped on shore at Rozel Bay he was as one who had come from the grave, haggard and old.

Hurrying up the hillside to his doorway, he called aloud to his wife, to his child. Throwing open the door, he burst in. His dead child lay upon a couch, and near by, sitting in a chair, with the sweat of the dying on her brow, was Angèle. As he dropped on his knee beside

her, she smiled and raised her hand as if to touch him, but the hand dropped and the head fell forward on his breast. She was gone into a greater peace.

Once more Michel made a journey—alone—to the Ecréhos, and there, under the ruins of the old Abbey of Val Richer, he buried the twain he had loved. Not once in all the terrible hours had he shed a tear; not once had his hand trembled; his face was like stone, and his eyes burned with an unearthly light.

He did not pray beside the graves; but he knelt and kissed the earth again and again. He had doffed his robes of peace, and now wore the garb of a soldier, armed at all points fully. Rising from his knees, he turned his face towards Jersey.

"Only mine! Only mine!" he said aloud in a dry, bitter voice.

In the whole island, only his loved ones had died of the plague. The holiness and charity and love of Michel and Angèle had ended so!

When once more he set forth upon the Channel, he turned his back on Jersey and shaped his course towards France, having sent Elizabeth his last excuses for declining a service which would have given him honour, fame and regard. He was bent upon a higher duty.

Not long did he wait for the death he craved. Next year, in a Huguenot sortie from Anvers, he was slain.

He died with these words on his lips:

"Maintenant, Angèle!"

In due time the island people forgot them both, but the Seigneur of Rozel caused a stone to be set up on the highest point of land that faces France, and on the stone were carved the names of Michel and Angèle. Having

done much hard service for his country and for England's Queen, Lemprière at length hung up his sword and gave his years to peace. From the Manor of Rozel he was wont to repair constantly to the little white house, which remained as the two had left it,—his own by order of the Queen,—and there, as time went on, he spent most of his days. To the last he roared with laughter if ever the name of Buonespoir was mentioned in his presence; he swaggered ever before the Royal Court and De Carteret of St. Ouen's; and he spoke proudly of his friendship with the Duke's Daughter, who had admired the cut of his jerkin at the Court of Elizabeth. But in the house where Angèle had lived he moved about as though in the presence of a beloved sleeper he would not awake.

Michel and Angèle had had their few years of exquisite life and love, and had gone; Lemprière had longer measure of life and little love, and who shall say which had more profit of breath and being? The generations have passed away, and the Angel of Equity hath a smiling pity as she scans the scales and the weighing of the Past.

THE END

"Come hither, O come hither,
There's a bride upon her bed;
They have strewn her o'er with roses,
There are roses 'neath her head:
Life is love and tears and laughter,
But the laughter it is dead—
Sing the way to the Valley, to the Valley!
Hey, but the roses they are red!"

JOHN ENDERBY

JOHN ENDERBY

I

Of all the good men that Lincolnshire gave to England to make her proud, strong and handsome, none was stronger, prouder and more handsome than John Enderby, whom King Charles made a knight against his will.

"Your gracious Majesty," said John Enderby, when the King was come to Boston town on the business of draining the Holland fen and other matters more important and more secret, "the honour your Majesty would confer is well beyond a poor man like myself, for all Lincolnshire knows that I am driven to many shifts to keep myself above water. Times have been hard these many years, and, craving your Majesty's pardon, our taxes have been heavy."

"Do you refuse knighthood of his Majesty?" asked Lord Rippingdale, with a sneer, patting the neck of his black stallion with a gloved hand.

"The King may command my life, my Lord Rippingdale," was Enderby's reply, "he may take me, body and bones and blood, for his service, but my poor name must remain as it is when his Majesty demands a price for honouring it."

"Treason," said Lord Rippingdale just so much above his breath as the King might hear.

"This in our presence!" said the King, tapping his foot upon the ground, his brows contracting, and the

narrow dignity of the divine right lifting his nostrils scornfully.

"No treason, may it please your Majesty," said Enderby, "and it were better to speak boldly to the King's face than to be disloyal behind his back. My estates will not bear the tax which the patent of this knighthood involves. I can serve the country no better as Sir John Enderby than as plain John Enderby, and I can serve my children best by shepherding my shattered fortunes for their sakes."

For a moment Charles seemed thoughtful, as though Enderby's reasons appealed to him, but Lord Rippingdale had now the chance which for ten years he had invited, and he would not let it pass.

"The honour which his Majesty offers, my good Lincolnshire squire, is more to your children than the few loaves and fishes which you might leave them. We all know how miserly John Enderby has grown."

Lord Rippingdale had touched the tenderest spot in the King's mind. His vanity was no less than his impecuniosity, and this was the third time in one day he had been defeated in his efforts to confer an honour, and exact a price beyond all reason for that honour. The gentlemen he had sought had found business elsewhere, and were not to be seen when his messengers called at their estates. It was not the King's way to give anything for nothing. Some of these gentlemen had been benefited by the draining of the Holland fens, which the King had undertaken, reserving a stout portion of the land for himself; but John Enderby benefited nothing, for his estates lay further north, and near the sea, not far from the town of Mablethorpe. He had paid all the taxes which the King had levied and had not murmured beyond his own threshold.

He spoke his mind with candour, and to him the King was still a man to whom the truth was to be told with directness, which was the highest honour one man might show another.

"Rank treason!" repeated Lord Rippingdale, loudly. "Enderby has been in bad company, your Majesty. If you are not wholly with the King, you are against him. 'He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.'"

A sudden anger seized the King, and turning, he set foot in the stirrup, muttering something to himself, which boded no good for John Enderby. A gentleman held the stirrup while he mounted, and, with Lord Rippingdale beside him in the saddle, he turned and spoke to Enderby. Self-will and resentment were in his tone.

"Knight of Enderby we have made you," he said, "and Knight of Enderby you shall remain. Look to it that you pay the fees for the accolade."

"Your Majesty," said Enderby, reaching out his hand in protest, "I will not have this greatness you would thrust upon me. Did your Majesty need, and speak to me as one gentleman to another in his need, then would I part with the last inch of my land; but to barter my estate for a gift that I have no heart nor use for—your Majesty, I cannot do it."

The hand of the King twisted in his bridle-rein, and his body stiffened in anger.

"See to it, my Lord Rippingdale," he said, "that our knight here pays to the last penny for the courtesy of the accolade. You shall levy upon his estate."

"We are both gentlemen, your Majesty, and my rights within the law are no less than your Majesty's," said Enderby stoutly.

"The gentleman forgets that the King is the fountain

of all law," said Lord Rippingdale obliquely to the King.

"We will make one new statute for this stubborn knight," said Charles; "even a writ of outlawry. His estates shall be confiscate to the Crown. Go seek a King and country better suited to your tastes, our rebel Knight of Enderby."

"I am still an Enderby of Enderby, and a man of Lincolnshire, your Majesty," answered the squire, as the King rode towards Boston church, where presently he should pray after this fashion with his subjects there assembled:

"*Most heartily we beseech Thee with Thy favour to behold our most gracious sovereign King Charles. Endue him plenteously with Heavenly gifts; grant him in health and wealth long to live; strengthen him that he may vanquish and overcome all his enemies; and, finally, after this life, he may attain everlasting joy and felicity.*"

With a heavy heart Enderby turned homewards; that is, towards Mablethorpe upon the coast, which lies between Saltfleet Haven and Skegness, two ports that are places of mark in the history of the kingdom, as all the world knows.

He had never been so vexed in his life. It was not so much anger against the King, for he had great reverence for the monarchy of England; but against Lord Rippingdale his mind was violent. Years before, in a quarrel between the Earl of Lindsey and Lord Rippingdale, upon a public matter which Parliament settled afterwards, he had sided with the Earl of Lindsey. The two Earls had been reconciled afterwards, but Lord Rippingdale had never forgiven Enderby.

In Enderby's brain ideas worked somewhat heavily; but to-day his slumberous strength was infused with

a spirit of action and the warmth of a pervasive idea. There was no darkness in his thoughts, but his pulse beat heavily and he could hear the veins throbbing under his ear impetuously. Once or twice as he rode on in the declining afternoon he muttered to himself. Now it was: "My Lord Rippingdale, indeed!" or "Not even for a King!" or "Sir John Enderby, forsooth! Sir John Enderby, forsooth!" Once again he spoke, reining in his horse beside a tall cross at four corners, near Stickford by the East Fen. Taking off his hat he prayed:

"Thou just God, do Thou judge between my King and myself. Thou knowest that I have striven as an honest gentleman to do right before all men. When I have seen my sin, oh, Lord, I have repented! Now I have come upon perilous times, the gins are set for my feet. Oh, Lord, establish me in true strength! Not for my sake do I ask that Thou wilt be with me and Thy wisdom comfort me, but for the sake of my good children. Wilt Thou spare my life in these troubles until they be well formed; till the lad have the bones of a man, and the girl the wise thought of a woman—for she hath no mother to shield and teach her. And if this be a wrong prayer, my God, forgive it: for I am but a blundering squire, whose tongue tells lamely what his heart feels."

His head was bowed over his horse's neck, his face turned to the cross, his eyes were shut, and he did not notice the strange and grotesque figure that suddenly appeared from among the low bushes by the fen near by.

It was an odd creature perched upon stilts; one of those persons called the stilt-walkers. They were no friends of the King, nor of the Earl of Lindsey, nor of my Lord Rippingdale, for the draining of these fens took

from them their means of living. They were messengers, postmen and carriers across the wide stretch of country from Spilsby, even down to the river Witham, and from Boston Deep down to Market Deeping and over to the sea. Since these fens were drained one might travel from Market Deeping to the Wolds without wetting a foot.

"Aw'll trooble thee a moment, maister," said the peasant. "A stilt-walker beant nowt i' the woorld. Howsome'er, aw've a woord to speak i' thy ear."

Enderby reined in his horse, and with a nod of complaisance (for he was a man ever kind to the poor, and patient with those who fared ill in the world) he waited for the other to speak.

"Thoo'rt the great Enderby of Enderby, maister," said the peasant, ducking his head and then putting on his cap; "aw've known thee sin tha wast no bigger nor a bit grass'opper i' the field. Wilt tha ride long, Sir John Enderby, and aw'll walk aside thee, ma grey nag with thy sorrel." He glanced down humorously at his own long wooden legs.

Enderby turned his horse round and proceeded on his way slowly, the old man striding along beside him like a stork.

"Why do you dub me Knight?" he asked, his eyes searching the face of the old man.

"Why shouldna aw call thee Knight if the King calls thee Knight? It is the dooty of a common man to call thee Sir John, and tak off his hat at saying o' it." His hat came off, and he nodded in such an odd way that Enderby burst out into a good honest laugh. "Dooth tha rememba little Tom Dowsby that went hoonting wi' thee when tha wert not yet come to age?" continued the stilt-walker. "Doost tha rememba when, for

a jest, thee and me stopped the lord bishop, tha own uncle, in the highway at midnight, and took his poorse from him, and the rich gold chain from his neck? And doost tha rememba that tha would have his apron too, for tha said that if it kept a bishop clean, wouldna it keep highwaymen clean, whose work was not so clean as a bishop's? Sir John Enderby, aw loove thee better than the King, an' aw loove thee better than my Lord Rippin'dale—ay, theere's a sour heart in a goodly body!"

John Enderby reined up his horse and looked the stilt-walker in the face.

"Are you little Tom Dowsby?" exclaimed he. "Are you that scamp?" He laughed all at once as though he had not a trouble in the world. "And do you keep up your evil practices? Do you still waylay bishops?"

"If aw confessed to Heaven or man, aw would confess to thee, Sir John Enderby; but aw'll confess nowt."

"And how know you that I am Sir John Enderby?"

"Even in Sleaford town aw kem to know it. Aw stood no further from his Majesty and Lord Rippin'dale than aw stand from you, when the pair talked by the Great Boar inn. Where doos tha sleep to-night?"

"At Spilsby."

"To-night the King sleeps at Sutterby on the Wolds. 'Tis well for thee tha doost not bide wi' his Majesty. Theer, aw've done thee a service."

"What service have you done me?"

"Aw've told thee that tha moost sleep by Spilsby when the King sleeps at Sutterby. Fare-thee-well, maister."

Doffing his cap once more, the stilt-walker suddenly stopped, and, turning aside, made his way with an almost incredible swiftness across the fen, taking the

ditches with huge grotesque strides. Enderby looked back and watched him for a moment curiously.

Suddenly the man's words began to repeat themselves in Enderby's head: "To-night the King sleeps at Sutterby on the Wolds. 'Tis well for thee tha doost not bide wi' his Majesty." Presently a dozen vague ideas began to take form. The man had come to warn him not to join the King at Sutterby.

There was some plot against Charles! These stilt-walkers were tools in the hands of the King's foes, who were growing more powerful every day. He would sleep to-night, not at Spilsby, but at Sutterby. He was a loyal subject; no harm that he could prevent should come to the King.

Before you come to Sutterby on the Wolds, as you travel north to the fenland, there is a combe through which the highway passes, and a stream which has on one side many rocks and boulders, and on the other a sort of hedge of trees and shrubs. It was here that the enemies of the King, that is, some stilt-walkers, with two dishonourable gentlemen who had suffered from the King's oppressions, placed themselves to waylay his Majesty. Lord Rippingdale had published it abroad that the King's route was towards Horncastle, but at Stickney by the fens the royal party separated, most of the company passing on to Horncastle, while Charles, Lord Rippingdale and two other cavaliers proceeded on a secret visit to a gentleman at Louth.

It was dark when the King and his company came to the combe. Lord Rippingdale suggested to his Majesty that one of the gentlemen should ride ahead to guard against surprise or ambush, but the King laughed, and said that his shire of Lincoln bred no brigands, and he rode on. He was in the coach with a gentleman beside

him, and Lord Rippingdale rode upon the right. Almost as the hoofs of the leaders plunged into the stream there came the whinny of a horse from among the boulders. Alarmed, the coachman whipped up his team and Lord Rippingdale clapped his hand upon his sword.

Even as he did it two men sprang out from among the rocks, seized the horses' heads, and a dozen others swarmed round, all masked and armed, and calling upon the King's party to surrender, and to deliver up their valuables. One ruffian made to seize the bridle of Lord Rippingdale's horse, but my lord's sword severed the fellow's hand at the wrist.

"Villain," he shouted, "do you know whom you attack?"

For answer, shots rang out; and as the King's gentlemen gathered close to the coach to defend him, the King himself opened the door and stepped out. As he did so a stilt struck him on the head. Its owner had aimed it at Lord Rippingdale; but as my lord's horse plunged, it missed him, and struck the King fair upon the crown of the head. He swayed, groaned and fell back into the open door of the coach. Lord Rippingdale was at once beside him, sword drawn, and fighting gallantly.

"Scoundrels," he cried, "will you kill your King?"

"We will have the money which the King carries," cried one of his assailants. "The price of three knighthoods and the taxes of two shires we will have."

One of the King's gentlemen had fallen, and another was wounded. Lord Rippingdale was hard pressed, but in what seemed the last extremity of the King and his party there came a shout from the other side of the stream:

"God save the King! For the King! For the King!"

A dozen horsemen splashed their way across the stream, and with swords and pistols drove through the King's assailants and surrounded his coach. The ruffians made an attempt to rally and resist the onset, but presently broke and ran, pursued by a half-dozen of his Majesty's defenders. Five of the assailants were killed and several were wounded.

As Lord Rippingdale turned to Charles to raise him, the coach-door was opened upon the other side, a light was thrust in, and over the unconscious body of the King my lord recognised John Enderby.

"His Majesty"—began John Enderby.

"His Majesty is better," replied Lord Rippingdale, as the King's eyes half opened. "You lead these gentlemen? This should bring you a barony, Sir John," my lord added, half graciously, half satirically; for the honest truth of this man's nature vexed him. "The King will thank you."

"John Enderby wants no reward for being a loyal subject, my lord," answered Enderby.

Then with another glance at the King, in which he knew that his Majesty was recovered, he took off his hat, bowed, and, mounting his horse, rode away without a word.

At Sutterby the gentlemen received gracious thanks of the King who had been here delivered from the first act of violence made against him in his reign.

Of the part which Enderby had played Lord Rippingdale said no more to the King than this:

"Sir John Enderby was of these gentlemen who saved your Majesty's life. Might it not seem to your Majesty that—"

"Was he of them?" interrupted the King kindly; then, all at once, out of his hurt vanity and narrow

self-will, he added petulantly: "When he hath paid for the accolade of his knighthood, then will we welcome him to us, and make him Baron of Enderby."

Next day when Enderby entered the great iron gates of the grounds of Enderby House the bell was ringing for noon. The house was long and low, with a fine tower in the centre, and two wings ran back, forming the court-yard, which would have been entirely inclosed had the stables moved up to complete the square.

When Enderby came out into the broad sweep of grass and lawn, flanked on either side by commendable trees, the sun shining brightly, the rooks flying overhead, and the smell of ripe summer in the air, he drew up his horse and sat looking before him.

"To lose it! To lose it!" he said, and a frown gathered upon his forehead.

Even as he looked, the figure of a girl appeared in the great doorway. Catching sight of the horseman, she clapped her hands and waved them delightedly.

Enderby's face cleared, as the sun breaks through a mass of clouds and lightens all the landscape. The slumberous eyes glowed, the square head came up. In five minutes he had dismounted at the great stone steps and was clasping his daughter in his arms.

"Felicity, my dear daughter!" he said, tenderly and gravely.

She threw back her head with a gaiety which bespoke the bubbling laughter in her heart, and said:

"Booh! to thy solemn voice. Oh, thou great bear, dost thou love me with tears in thine eyes?"

She took his hand and drew him inside the house, where, laying aside his hat and gloves and sword, they passed into the great library.

"Come, now, tell me all the places thou hast visited," she said, perching herself on his arm-chair.

He told her, and she counted them off one by one upon her fingers.

"That is ninety miles of travel thou hast had. What is the most pleasing thing thou hast seen?"

"It was in Stickford by the fen," he answered, after a perplexed pause. "There was an old man upon the roadside with his head bowed in his hands. Some lads were making sport of him, for he seemed so woe-begone and old. Two cavaliers of the King came by. One of them stopped and drove the lads away, then going to the old man, he said: 'Friend, what is thy trouble?' The old man raised his melancholy face and answered: 'Aw'm afeared, sir.' 'What fear you?' inquired the young gentleman. 'I fear ma wife, sir,' replied the old man. At that the other cavalier sat back in his saddle and guffawed merrily. 'Well, Dick,' said he to his friend, 'that is the worst fear in this world. Ah, Dick, thou hast ne'er been married!' 'Why do you fear your wife?' asked Dick. 'Aw've been robbed of ma horse and saddle and twelve skeins o' wool. Aw'm lost, aw'm ruined and shall raise ma head nevermore. To ma wife aw shall ne'er return.' 'Tut tut, man,' said Dick, 'get back to your wife. You are master of your own house; you rule the roost. What is a wife? A wife's a woman. You are a man. You are bigger and stronger, your bones are harder. Get home and wear a furious face and batter in the door and say: "What, ho, thou huzzy!" Why, man, fear you the wife of your bosom?' The old man raised his head and said: 'Tha doost not know ma wife or tha wouldst not speak like that.' At that Dick laughed and said: 'Fellow, I do pity thee;' and taking the old man by the shoulders, he lifted him

on his own horse and took him to the village fair. There he bought him twelve skeins of wool and sent him on his way rejoicing, with a horse worth five times his own."

With her chin in her hands the girl had listened intently to the story. When it was finished she said:

"What didst thou say was the gentleman's name?"

"His friend called him Dick. He is a poor knight, one Sir Richard Mowbray, of Leicester, called at Court and elsewhere Happy Dick Mowbray, for they do say a happier and braver heart never wore the King's uniform."

"Indeed I should like to know that Sir Richard Mowbray. And, tell me now, who is the greatest person thou hast seen in thy absence?"

"I saw the King—at Boston town."

"The King! The King!" Her eyes lightened, her hands clapped merrily. "What did he say to thee? Now, now, there is that dark light in thine eyes again. I will not have it so!" With her thumbs she daintily drew down the eyelids and opened them again. "There, that's better. Now what did the King say to thee?"

"He said to me that I should be Sir John Enderby, of Enderby."

"A knight! A knight! He made thee a knight?" she asked gaily. She slipped from his knee and courtesied before him, then seeing the heaviness of his look, she added: "Booh, Sir John Enderby, why dost thou look so grave? Is knighthood so big a burden thou dost groan under it?"

"Come here, my lass," he said gently. "Thou art young, but day by day thy wisdom grows, and I can trust thee. It is better thou shouldst know from my own lips the peril this knighthood brings, than that

trouble should suddenly fall and thou be unprepared."

Drawing her closely to him he told her the story of his meeting with the King; of Lord Rippingdale; of the King's threat to levy upon his estates and to issue a writ of outlawry against him.

For a moment the girl trembled, and Enderby felt her hands grow cold in his own, for she had a quick and sensitive nature and passionate intelligence and imagination.

"Father," she cried pantingly, indignantly, "the King would make thee an outlaw, would seize upon thy estates, because thou wouldst not pay the price of a paltry knighthood!" Suddenly her face flushed, the blood came back with a rush, and she stood upon her feet. "I would follow thee to the world's end rather than that thou shouldst pay one penny for that honour. The King offered thee knighthood? Why, two hundred years before the King was born, an Enderby was promised an earldom. Why shouldst thou take a knighthood now? Thou didst right, thou didst right." Her fingers clasped in eager emphasis.

"Dost thou not see, my child," said he, "that any hour the King's troops may surround our house and take me prisoner and separate thee from me? I see but one thing to do; even to take thee at once from here and place thee with thy aunt, Mistress Falkingham, in Shrewsbury."

"Father," the girl said, "thou shalt not put me away from thee. Let the King's men surround Enderby House and the soldiers and my Lord Rippingdale levy upon the estates of Enderby. Neither his Majesty nor my Lord Rippingdale dare put a finger upon me—I would tear their eyes out."

Enderby smiled half sadly at her, and answered:

"The fear of a woman is one of the worst fears in this world. Booh!"

So ludicrously did he imitate her own manner of a few moments before that humour drove away the flush of anger from her face, and she sat upon his chair-arm and said:

"But we will not part; we will stand here till the King and Lord Rippingdale do their worst—is it not so, father?"

He patted her head caressingly.

"Thou sayest right, my lass; we will remain at Enderby. Where is thy brother Garrett?"

"He has ridden over to Mablethorpe, but will return within the hour," she replied.

At that moment there was a sound of hoofs in the court-yard. Running to a rear window of the library Mistress Felicity clapped her hands and said:

"It is he—Garrett."

Ten minutes afterwards the young man entered. He was about two years older than his sister; that is, seventeen. He was very tall for his age, with dark hair and a pale dry face, and of distinguished bearing. Unlike his father, he was slim and gracefully built, with no breadth or power to his shoulders, but with an athletic suppleness and a refinement almost womanlike. He was tenacious, overbearing, self-willed, somewhat silent and also somewhat bad-tempered.

There was excitement in his eye as he entered. He came straight to his father, giving only a nod to Mistress Felicity, who twisted her head in a demure little way, as though in mockery of his important manner.

"Booh!—my lord duke!" she said almost under her breath.

"Well, my son," said Enderby, giving him his hand, "your face has none so cheerful a look. Hast thou no welcome for thy father?"

"I am glad you are home again, sir," said young Enderby, more dutifully than cordially.

There was silence for a moment.

"You do not ask my news," said his father, eyeing him debatingly.

"I have your news, sir," was the young man's half sullen reply.

His sister came near her father, where she could look her brother straight in the face, and her deep blue eyes fixed upon him intently. The smile almost faded from her lips, and her square chin seemed suddenly to take on an air of seriousness and strength.

"Well, sir?" asked his father.

"That you, sir, have refused a knighthood of the King; that he insists upon your keeping it; that he is about to levy upon your estates: and that you are outlawed from England."

"And what think you about the matter?" asked his father.

"I think it is a gentleman's duty to take the King's gifts without question," answered the young man.

"Whether the King be just or not, eh? Where would England have been, my son, if the barons had submitted to King John? Where would the Enderbys have been had they not withstood the purposes of Queen Mary? Come, come, the King has a chance to prove himself as John Enderby has proven himself. Midst other news, heard you not that last night I led a dozen gentlemen to the rescue of the King?"

"'Twas said in the village that his Majesty would remove his interdict and make you a baron, sir, if you met his levy for the knighthood."

"That I shall never do. Answer me, my son, do you stand with the King or with your father in this?"

"I am an Enderby," answered the youth, moodily, "and I stand with the head of our house."

That night as candles were being lighted, three score of the King's men, headed by Lord Rippingdale, placed themselves before the house, and an officer was sent forward to summon forth John Enderby.

Enderby had gathered his men together, and they were posted for defence at the doorways and entrances, and along the battlements. The windows were all heavily shuttered and barred.

The young officer commissioned to demand an interview with Enderby came forward and knocked at the great entrance door. It opened presently and showed within the hallway a dozen men well armed. Enderby came forward to meet him.

"I am Sir Richard Mowbray," said the newcomer. "I am sent by Lord Rippingdale, who arrives on a mission from his Majesty."

Enderby, recognising his visitor, was mild in his reply.

"Sir Richard Mowbray, I pray you tell Lord Rippingdale that he is welcome—as commissioner of the King."

Mowbray smiled and bowed.

"My lord begs me to ask that you will come forth and speak with him, Sir John?"

"My compliments to Lord Rippingdale, Sir Richard, and say that I can better entertain his Majesty's commissioner within my own house."

"And all who wait with him?" asked the young officer, with a dry sort of smile.

"My lord, and his officers and gentlemen, but not his troopers."

Mowbray bowed, and as he lifted his head again he saw the face of Mistress Felicity looking through the doorway of the library. Their eyes met. On a sudden a new impulse came to his thoughts.

"Sir John Enderby," said he, "I know how honourable a man you are, and I think I know the way you feel. But, as one gentleman to another, permit me a word of counsel. 'Twere better to humour my Lord Rippingdale, and to yield up to the King's demands, than to lose all. Lack of money and estate—that is hard enough on a single man like me, but with a gentleman who has the care of a daughter, perhaps"—his look again met the young lady's face—"the case is harder. A little yielding on your part—"

"I will not yield," was Enderby's reply.

Mowbray bowed once more, and retired without more speaking.

In a few moments he returned, Lord Rippingdale with him. The entrance doors were once more opened, and my lord, in a temper, at once began:

"You press your courtesies too far, Sir John Enderby."

"Less strenuously than the gentlemen of the road pressed their discourtesies upon his Majesty and yourself last night, my lord."

"I am come upon that business. For your bravery and loyalty, if you will accept the knighthood, and pay the sum set as the courtesy of the accolade, his Majesty will welcome you at Court, and raise you to a barony. But his Majesty must see that his dignity be not injured."

"The King may have my life and all my goods as a gift, but I will not give either by these indirect means. It does not lie in a poor squire like me to offend the King's dignity."

"You are resolved?"

"I am resolved," answered Enderby, stubbornly.

"Then you must bear the consequences, and yield up your estates and person into my hands. Yourself and your family are under arrest, to be dealt with hereafter as his Majesty sees fit."

"I will not yield up my estates, nor my person, nor my son and daughter, of my free will."

With an incredulous smile, Rippingdale was about to leave and enter upon a siege of the house, when he saw young Enderby and caught a strange look in his face.

"Young gentleman," said he, "are you a cipher in this game? A barony hangs on this. Are you as stubborn and unruly as the head of your house?"

Garrett Enderby made no reply, but turned and walked into the library, his father's and sister's eyes following him in doubt and dismay, for the chance was his at that moment to prove himself.

A moment afterwards Lord Rippingdale was placing his men to attack the house, disposing of some to secure a timber to batter in the door, and of some to make assaults upon the rear of the building. Enderby had placed his men advantageously to resist attack, giving the defence of the rear of the house to his son. Mistress Felicity he had sent to an upper room in the care of her aunt.

Presently the King's men began the action, firing wherever a figure showed itself, and carrying a log to batter in the entrance door. Enderby's men did good work, bringing down four of the besiegers at the first volley.

Those who carried the log hesitated for a moment, and Enderby called encouragingly to his men.

At this exciting moment, while calling to his men, he saw what struck him dumb—his son hurrying forward with a flag of truce to Lord Rippingdale! Instantly my lord commanded his men to retire.

"Great God!" said Sir John, with a groan, "my son—my only son—a traitor!" Turning to his men he bade them cease firing.

Throwing open the entrance doors, he stood upon the steps and waited for Lord Rippingdale.

"You see, Sir John Enderby, your son—" began my lord.

"It was to maintain my rights, and for my son's sake and my daughter's, that I resisted the command of the King," interrupted the distressed and dishonoured gentleman, "but now—"

"But now you yield?"

He inclined his head, then looking down to the place where his son stood, he said:

"My son—my only son!" And his eyes filled with tears.

His distress was so moving that even Rippingdale was constrained to say:

"He did it for your sake. His Majesty will—"

With a gesture of despair Enderby turned and entered the house, and passed into the library, where he found his daughter. Pale and tearful she threw herself into his arms.

At eleven o'clock that night as they sat in the same room, while Lord Rippingdale and his officers supped in the dining-room, Sir Richard Mowbray hurriedly entered.

"Come quickly," said he; "the way is clear—here by this window. The sentinels are drunk. You will find horses by the gate of the grape-garden, and two of your

serving-men mounted. They will take you to a hiding-place on the coast—I have instructed them."

As he talked he helped them through the window, and bade them good-bye hurriedly; but he did not let Mistress Felicity's hand drop till he had kissed it and wished her a whispered God-speed.

When they had gone he listened for a time, but hearing no sound of surprise or discovery, he returned to the supper room, where Garrett Enderby sat drinking with Lord Rippingdale and the cavaliers.

II

SEVEN years went by before John Enderby saw his son again or set foot in Enderby House. Escaping to Holland on a night when everything was taken from him save his honour and his daughter, he had lived there with Mistress Felicity, taking service in the army of the country.

Outlaw as he was, his estates given over to his son who now carried a knighthood bestowed by King Charles, he was still a loyal subject to the dynasty which had dishonoured him. When the King was beheaded at Whitehall he mourned and lamented the miserable crime with the best of his countrymen.

It was about this time that he journeyed into France, and there he stayed with his daughter two years. Mistress Falkingham, her aunt, was with her, and watched over her as carefully as when she was a child in Enderby House.

About this time, Cromwell, urged by solicitous friends of the outlaw, sent word to him to return to England, that he might employ him in foreign service, if he did not care to serve in England itself. Cromwell's mes-

sage was full of comforting reflections upon his sufferings and upon the injustice that had been done to him by the late King. For his daughter's sake, who had never been entirely happy out of England, Enderby returned, and was received with marked consideration by Cromwell at Whitehall.

"Your son, sir," said Cromwell, "hath been a follower of the man of sin. He was of those notorious people who cried out against the work of God's servants when Charles paid the penalty of his treason at Whitehall. Of late I have received news that he is of those children of Belial who are intriguing to bring back the second Charles. Two days ago he was bidden to leave Enderby House. If he be found among those who join the Scotch army to fight for the Pretender, he shall bear the penalty of his offence."

"He has been ill advised, your Highness," said Enderby.

"He shall be advised better," was the stern reply. "We will have peace in England, and we will, by the help of the Lord's strong arm, rid this realm of these recalcitrant spirits. For you, sir, you shall return to your estate at Enderby, and we will use you abroad as opportunity shall occur. Your son has taken to himself the title which the man of sin conferred upon you, to your undoing."

"Your Highness," replied Enderby, "I have but one desire, and that is peace. I have been outlawed from England so long, and my miseries have been so great, that I accept gladly what the justice of your Highness gives thus freely. But I must tell your Highness that I was no enemy of King Charles, and am no foe to his memory. The wrong was done by him to me, and not returned by me to him, and the issue is between our

Maker and ourselves. But it is the pride of all Englishmen that England be well governed, and strong and important in the eyes of the nations; and all these things has your Highness achieved. I will serve my country honourably abroad, or rest peacefully here on my own estate, lifting no hand against your Highness, though I hold to the succession in the monarchy."

Cromwell looked at him steadily and frowningly for a minute, then presently, his face clearing, he said:

"Your words, detached from your character, sir, would be traitorous; but as we stand, two gentlemen of England face to face, they seem to me like the words of an honest man, and I love honesty before all other things. Get to your home, sir. You must not budge from it until I send for you. Then, as proof of your fidelity to the ruler of your country, you shall go on whatever mission I send you."

"Your Highness, I will do what seems my duty in the hour of your summons."

"You shall do the will of the Lord," answered the Protector, and, bowing a farewell, turned upon his heel.

Enderby looked after him a moment, then moved towards the door, and as he went out to mount his horse he muttered to himself:

"The will of the Lord as ordained by Oliver Cromwell—humph!"

Then he rode away up through Trafalgar Square and into the Tottenham Court Road, and so on out into the Shires until he came to Enderby House.

Outside all was as he had left it seven years before, though the hedges were not so well kept and the grass was longer before the house. An air of loneliness pervaded all the place. No one met him at the door. He rode round into the court-yard and called. A man-

servant came out. From him he learned that four of Cromwell's soldiers were quartered in the house, that all the old servants, save two, were gone, and that his son had been expelled the place by Cromwell's order two days before. Inside the house there was less change. Boon companion of the boisterous cavaliers as his son had been, the young man's gay hours had been spent more away from Enderby House than in it.

When young Enderby was driven from his father's house by Cromwell, he determined to join the Scotch army which was expected soon to welcome Charles the Second from France. There he would be in contact with Lord Rippingdale and his Majesty. When Cromwell was driven from his place, great honours might await him. Hearing in London, however, that his father had returned, and was gone on to the estate, he turned his horse about and rode back again, travelling by night chiefly, and reached Enderby House four days after his father's arrival there.

He found his father seated alone at the dinner-table. Swinging wide open the door of the dining-room he strode in aggressively.

The old man stood up in his place at the table and his eyes brightened expectantly when he saw his son, for his brain was quickened by the thought that perhaps, after all his wrong-doing, the boy had come back to stand by him, a repentant prodigal. He was a man of warm and firm spirit, and now his breast heaved with his emotions. This boy had been the apple of his eye. Since the day of his birth he had looked for great things from him, and had seen in him the refined perpetuation of the sturdy race of the Enderbys. He counted himself but a rough sort of country gentleman, and the courtly face of his son had suggested the country gentle-

man cast in a finer mould. He was about to speak kindly as of old, but the young man, with clattering spurs, came up to the other end of the table, and with a dry insolence said:

"By whose invitation do you come here?"

The blood fled from the old man's heart. For a moment he felt sick, and his face turned white. He dropped his head a little and looked at his son steadily and mournfully.

"Shall a man need an invitation to his own house, my son?" he said at last.

The arrogant lips of the young man tightened; he tossed up his head. "The house is mine. I am the master here. You are an outlaw."

"An outlaw no longer," answered the old man, "for the Protector has granted me again the home of which I was cruelly dispossessed."

"The Protector is a rebel!" returned the young man, and his knuckles rapped petulantly upon the table. "I stand for the King—for King Charles the Second. When you were dispossessed, his late martyred Majesty made me master of this estate and a knight also."

The old man's hands clinched, in the effort to rule himself to quietness.

"You are welcome to the knighthood which I have never accepted," said he; "but for these estates—" All at once a fierce anger possessed him, and the great shoulders heaved up and down with emotion—"but for these estates, sir, no law nor king can take them from me. I am John Enderby, the first son of a first son, the owner of these lands since the time my mother gave me birth. You, sir, are the first of our name that ever was a traitor to his house."

So intent were the two that they did not see or hear

three men who drew aside the curtains at the end of the room and stood spying upon them—three of Cromwell's men. Young Enderby laughed sneeringly and answered:

"It was a King of England that gave Enderby Manor to the Enderbys. The King is the source of all estate and honour, and I am loyal to the King. He is a traitor who spurns the King's honour and defies it. He is a traitor who links his fortunes with that vile, murderous upstart, that blethering hypocrite, Oliver Cromwell. I go to Scotland to join King Charles, and before three months are over his Majesty will have come into his own again and I also into my own here at Enderby."

The old man trembled with the fierceness of his emotions.

"I only am master here," he said, "and I should have died upon this threshold ere my Lord Rippingdale and the King's men had ever crossed it, but for you, an Enderby, who deserted me in the conflict—a coward who went over to the enemies of our house."

The young man's face twitched with a malignant anger. He suddenly started forward, and with a sidelong blow struck his father with the flat of his sword. A red ridge of bruised flesh instantly rose upon the old man's cheek and ear. He caught the arm of the chair by which he stood, staggering back as though he had received a mortal wound.

"No, no, no!" he said, his voice gulping with misery and horror. "No, no! Kill me, if you will—but I cannot fight you. Oh, my God, my God!" he gasped scarcely above a whisper. "Unnatural—unnatural!"

He said no more, for, upon the instant, four men entered the room. They were of Cromwell's Ironsides. Young Enderby looked round swiftly, ready to fight,

but he saw at once that he was trapped. The old man also laid his hand upon his sword, but he saw that the case was hopeless. He dropped into his chair and leaned his head upon his hands.

Two months went by. The battle of Dunbar was fought, and Charles had lost it. Among the prisoners was Garrett Enderby, who had escaped from his captors on the way from Enderby House to London, and had joined the Scottish army. He was now upon trial for his life. Cromwell's anger against him was violent. The other prisoners of war were treated as such, and were merely confined to prison, but young Enderby was charged with blasphemy and sedition, and with assaulting one of Cromwell's officers—for on the very day that young Enderby made the assault, Cromwell's foreign commission for John Enderby was on its way to Lincolnshire.

Of the four men who had captured Garrett Enderby at Enderby House, three had been killed in battle, and the other had deserted. The father was thus the chief witness against his son. He was recalled from Portugal where he had been engaged upon Cromwell's business.

The young man's judges leaned forward expectantly as John Enderby took his place. The Protector himself sat among them.

"What is your name, sir?" asked Cromwell.

"John Enderby, your Highness."

"It hath been said that you hold a title given you by the man of sin."

"I have never taken a title from any man, your Highness."

A look of satisfaction crossed the gloomy and puritanical faces of the officers of the court-martial. Other

questions were put, and then came the vital points. To the first of these, as to whether young Enderby had uttered malignant and seditious libels against the Protector, the old man would answer nothing.

"What speech hath ever been between my son and myself," he said, "is between my son and myself only."

A start of anger travelled round the circle of the court-martial. Young Enderby watched his father curiously and sullenly.

"Duty to country comes before all private feeling," said Cromwell. "I command you, sir, on peril of a charge of treason against yourself, to answer the question of the Court. 'If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy foot cause thee to stumble, heave it to the shambles. The pernicious branch of the just tree shall be cloven and cast into the brush-heap.' You are an officer of this commonwealth, sir?" asked Cromwell, again.

"By your Highness's permission," he replied.

"Did your son strike you upon the face with the flat of his sword upon the night recorded in this charge against him?"

"What acts have passed between my son and myself are between my son and myself only," replied Enderby, steadily. He did not look at his son, but presently the tears rolled down his cheeks, so that more than one of his judges who had sons of their own were themselves moved. But they took their cue from the Protector, and made no motion towards the old man's advantage. Once more Cromwell essayed to get Enderby's testimony, but, "I will not give witness against my son," was his constant and dogged reply. At last Cromwell rose in anger.

"We will have justice in this realm of England," said

he, "though it turn the father against the son and the son against the father. Though the house be divided against itself yet the Lord's work shall be done."

Turning his blazing eyes upon John Enderby, he said:

"Troublous and degenerate man, get gone from this country, and no more set foot in it on peril of your life. We recalled you from outlawry, believing you to be a true lover of your country, but we find you malignant, seditious and dangerous."

He turned towards the young man.

"You, sir, shall get you back to prison until other witnesses be found. Although we know your guilt, we will be formal and just."

With an impatient nod to an officer beside him, he waved his hand towards father and son.

As he was about to leave the room, John Enderby stretched out a hand to him appealingly.

"Your Highness," said he, "I am an old man."

"Will you bear witness in this cause?" asked Cromwell, his frown softening a little.

"Your Highness, I have suffered unjustly; the lad is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. I cannot—"

With an angry wave of the hand Cromwell walked heavily from the room.

Some touch of shame came to the young man's cold heart, and he spoke to his father as the officers were about to lead him away.

"I have been wrong, I have misunderstood you, sir," he said, and he seemed about to hold out his hand.

But it was too late. The old man turned on him, shaking his shaggy head.

"Never, sir, while I live. The wrong to me is little. I can take my broken life into a foreign land and die dishonoured and forgotten. But my other child, my

one dear child who has suffered year after year with me —for the wrong you have done her, I never, never, never will forgive you. Not for love of you have I spoken as I did to-day, but for the honour of the Enderbys and because you were the child of your mother."

Two days later at Southampton the old man boarded a little packet-boat bound for Havre.

III

The years went by again. At last all was changed in England. The monarchy was restored, and the land was smiling and content. One day there was a private reading in the Queen's chamber of the palace. The voice of the reader moved in pleasant yet vibrant modulations:

"The King was now come to a time when his enemies wickedly began to plot against him secretly and to oppose him in his purposes; which, in his own mind, were beneficent and magnanimous. From the shire where his labours had been most unselfish came the first malignant insult to his person and the first peril to his life, prefiguring the hellish plots and violence which drove him to his august martyrdom—"

The King had entered quietly as the lady-in-waiting read this passage to the Queen, and, attracted by her voice, continued to listen, signifying to the Queen, by a gesture, that she and her ladies were not to rise. This was in the time when Charles was yet devoted to his Princess of Portugal, and while she was yet happy and undisturbed by rumours—or assurances—of her Lord's wandering affections.

"And what shire was that?" asked the King at that point where the chronicler spoke of his royal father's "august martyrdom."

"The shire of Lincoln, your Majesty," said the young lady who read, flushing. Then she rose from her footstool at the Queen's feet, and made the King an elaborate courtesy.

Charles waved a gentle and playful gesture of dissent from her extreme formality, and, with a look of admiration, continued:

"My Lord Rippingdale should know somewhat of that 'first violence' of which you have read, Mistress Falkingham. He is of Lincolnshire."

"He knows all, your Majesty; he was present at that 'first violence.'"

"It would be amusing for Rippingdale to hear these records—my Lord Clarendon's, are they not? Ah—not in the formal copy of his work? And by order of my Lord Rippingdale? Indeed! And wherefore, my Lord Rippingdale?"

"Shall I read on, your Majesty?" asked the young lady, with heightened colour, and a look of adventure and purpose in her eyes. Perhaps, too, there was a look of anger in them—not against the King, for there was a sort of eagerness or appealing in the glance she cast towards his Majesty.

The Queen lifted her eyes to the King half doubtfully, for the question seemed to her perilous, Charles being little inclined, as a rule, to listen to serious reading, though he was ever gay in conversation, and alert for witty badinage. His Majesty, however, seemed more than complaisant; he was even boyishly eager.

The young lady had been but a short time in the household, having come over with the Queen from Portugal, where she had been brought to the notice of the then Princess by her great coolness and bravery in rescuing a young lady of Lisbon from grave peril. She

had told the Princess then that she was the daughter of an exiled English gentleman, and was in the care of her aunt, one Mistress Falkingham, while her father was gone on an expedition to Italy. The Princess, eager to learn English, engaged her, and she had remained in the palace till the Princess left for England. A year passed, and then the Queen of England sent for her, and she had been brought close to the person of her Majesty.

At a motion from Charles, who sat upon a couch, idly tapping the buckles on his shoes with a gold-handled staff, the young lady placed herself again at the Queen's feet and continued reading:

"It was when the King was come to Boston town upon the business of the Fens and to confer sundry honours and inquire into the taxes, and for further purpose of visiting a good subject at Louth, who knew of the secret plans of Pym and Hampden, that this shameful violence befel our pious and illustrious prince. With him was my Lord Rippingdale and—"

"Ah, ah, my Lord Rippingdale!" said Charles, half aloud, "so this is where my lord and secret history meet —my dear, dumb lord."

Continuing, the young lady read a fair and just account of the King's meeting with John Enderby, of Enderby's refusal to accept the knighthood, and of his rescue of the King at Sutterby.

"Enderby? Enderby?" interjected the King, "that was not one Sir Garrett Enderby who was with the Scottish army at Dunbar?"

"No, your Majesty," said the young lady, scarcely looking up from the page she held, "Sir Garrett Enderby died in Portugal, where he fled, having escaped from prison and Cromwell's vengeance."

"What Enderby did this fine thing then? My faith, my martyred father had staunch men—even in Lincolnshire."

"The father of Sir Garrett Enderby it was, your Majesty."

"How came the son by the knighthood? 'S'death, it seems to me I have a memory of this thing somewhere, if I could but find it!"

"His gracious Majesty of sacred memory gave him his knighthood."

"Let me hear the whole story. Is it all there, Mistress Falkingham?" said the King, nodding towards the pages she held.

"It is not all here, your Majesty; but I can tell what so many in England know, and something of what no one in England knows."

The Queen put out her hand as if to stay the telling, for she saw what an impression her fair reader had made upon the King. But the young lady saw no one save Charles—she did not note the entrance of two gentlemen, one of whom looked at her in surprise. This was Sir Richard Mowbray of Leicester. The other was Lord Rippingdale (now lord chamberlain), who had brought Sir Richard thither at the request of the King. Sir Richard had been momentarily expected on his return from a mission to Spain, and my Lord had orders to bring him to the King on the very instant of his arrival.

The King waved his hand when Lord Rippingdale would have come forward, and the young lady continued with the history of John Enderby. She forgot her surroundings. It seemed as though she were giving vent to the suppressed feelings, imaginations, sufferings and wrongs of years. Respectfully, but sadly, when speak-

ing of the dead King; eloquently, tenderly, when speaking of her father; bitterly, when speaking of Oliver Cromwell, she told the story with a point, a force and a passionate intelligence, which brought to the face of Charles a look of serious admiration. He straightened himself where he sat, and did not let his eyes wander from the young lady's face. As she spoke of Sir Garrett Enderby and his acts—his desertion when Lord Rippingdale laid siege to the house, his quarrel with his father, the trial of the son, the father's refusal to testify against him, and the second outlawing by Cromwell—her voice faltered, but she told the tale bravely and determinedly; for she now saw Lord Rippingdale in the chamber. Whenever she had mentioned his name in the narrative, it was with a slight inflection of scorn, which caused the King to smile; and when she spoke of the ruin of Enderby House, her brother's death and her father's years of exile, tears came into the Queen's eyes, and the King nodded his head in sympathy.

Sir Richard Mowbray, with face aflame, watched her closely. As she finished her story he drew aside to where she could not see him without turning round. But Lord Rippingdale she saw with ease, and she met his eyes firmly, and one should say, with some malicious triumph, were she not a woman.

"My lord Rippingdale," said the King, slowly and bitingly, "what shall be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honour?"

"Were I Mordecai I could better answer that question, Sir," was my Lord's reply.

"Perhaps my Lord Rippingdale could answer for Haman, then," returned his Majesty.

"My imagination is good, but not fifty cubits high, Sir."

The answer pleased the King. For he ever turned life into jest—his sorrows and his joys. He rose motioning towards the door, and Lord Rippingdale passed out just behind him, followed by Sir Richard Mowbray, who stole a glance at the young chronicler as he went. She saw him, then recognised him, and flushed scarlet. She did not dare, however, to let him come to her. He understood, and he went his way after the King and Lord Rippingdale.

In all the years that had passed since the night he had helped her father and herself to escape from Enderby House; since he aided them to leave their hiding-place on the coast and escape to Holland, she had never forgotten his last words to her, the laughing look of his eyes, the pressure of his hand. Many a time since she had in her own mind thought of him as she had heard her father call him, even as "Happy Dick Mowbray!" and the remembrance of his joyous face had been a help to her in all her sufferings. His brown hair was now streaked with grey, but the light in the face was the same; there was the same alertness and buoyant health in the figure and the same row of laughing white teeth.

As she stood watching the departing figure, she scarcely knew that the Queen was preparing to go to her bed-chamber. She became aware of it definitely by the voice of her Majesty, now somewhat petulant.

Two hours later she was walking alone in one of the galleries when, hearing a gentle step behind her, she turned and saw the King. She made an obeisance and was about to move on, when he stopped her, speaking kindly to her, and thanking her for the great pleasure she had given him that afternoon.

"What should be done for this quasi knight of Enderby?" asked the King.

"He saved the life of the King," she said; then boldly, confidently, "your Majesty, for conscience sake he lost all—what can repay him for his dishonoured years and his ruined home!"

"What think you, Mistress, should be done with him? Speak freely of the man whom the King delighteth to honour."

She felt the sincerity under the indolent courtesy, and spoke as only a woman can speak for those she loves.

"Your Majesty, he should have the earldom promised his ancestor by Wolsey, and his estates restored to him as he left them."

The King laughed dryly.

"He might refuse the large earldom, as he scorned the little knighthood."

"If your Majesty secured him estates suitable to his rank he could have no reason to refuse. He was solicitous and firm then for his son—but now!"

Her reply was as diplomatic and suggestive as it was sincere, and Charles loved such talents.

"Upon my soul, dear Mistress Falkingham, I love your cleverness," said the King, "and I will go further, I—" He stooped and whispered in her ear, but she drew back in affright and anxiety.

"Oh, your Majesty, your Majesty," she said, "I had not thought—"

She moved on distractedly, but he put out his hand and stayed her.

"Ah, a moment, sweetheart," he urged.

"I must go to the Queen," she answered hurriedly. "Oh, your Majesty, your Majesty," she repeated, "would you ruin me?" Her eyes filled with tears. "Until the Queen welcomed me here I have had nothing but sorrow. I am friendless and alone."

"No, no," said Charles, kindly, "not alone while Charles is King in England."

"I am little more than an orphan here," she said, "for my father is now only a common soldier, your Majesty, and—"

"A common soldier!" repeated Charles a little stiffly; "they told me he was a gentleman of England doing service in Italy."

"My father is in your Majesty's household guard," she answered. "He was John Enderby—alas! none would recognise him now as such."

The King stared at her a moment.

"You—you—Mistress—you are John Enderby's daughter?"

Her reply was scarce above a whisper.

"His only child, Sir."

"Upon my soul! Upon my soul!" was all Charles said for a moment, and then he added: "Why did you not speak before?"

"My father would not permit me, your Majesty. He is only returned to England these few months."

"He is here to—?"

"To be near to myself, Sir."

The King bowed low over her hand.

"Mistress Enderby," said he, frankly, "we are honoured by your presence in this place. To-morrow morning at eleven your father shall come to us. You are still but a child in face," he said; "and yet—eh?"

"I am twenty-seven years old," she answered frankly.

"Quite old enough to be a countess," he said charmingly, "and young enough to enjoy the honours thereof."

So saying he bowed again, and with a gracious smile dismissed her. She went so quickly that she did not see

two gentlemen almost at her elbow as she left the gallery. One of them was Lord Rippingdale.

"Ha," said my lord, with a wicked smile, "a new violet in the King's garden!"

His companion turned on him swiftly.

"My lord," said he, "this is the second time to-day you have slandered this lady."

The other lifted his eyebrows.

"Is it a slander to say that the King finds a lady charming at any hour o' the clock?" he rejoined.

Sir Richard slapped him across the cheek with his glove.

"I take a pleasant duty from John Enderby's shoulders, my lord. I will meet you at your pleasure."

The next morning at sunrise Lord Rippingdale declared with his last breath that he did not know the lady was John Enderby's daughter, and he begged Sir Richard to carry to Enderby his regret for all past wrongs.

Sir Richard came in upon the King at the moment that his Majesty was receiving John Enderby—a white-headed old man, yet hale and strong, and wearing the uniform of the King's Guard. The fire of Enderby's eye was not quenched. The King advanced towards him, and said:

"You are welcome to our Court, Squire Enderby. You have been absent too long. You will honour us by accepting a tardy justice—without a price," he added, in a low tone.

"Your Majesty," said Enderby, "for me justice comes too late, but for my child—"

"An earldom can never come too late—eh?" asked the King, smiling gaily.

"For me, your Majesty, all comes too late except—" his voice shook a little—"except the house where I was born."

Charles looked at him gravely.

"Upon my soul, Enderby," said he, "you are a man to be envied. We will not rob you of your good revenge on our house or of your independence. But still we must have our way. Your daughter,"—he turned lightly towards Felicity,—"if she will not refuse me, and she cannot upon the ground that you refused my father—she shall be Countess of Enderby in her own right; with estates in keeping."

Womanlike, Mistress Felicity had no logical argument against an honour so munificently ordained.

"And now for your estates—who holds them?" asked the King.

"Lord Rippingdale, your Majesty," answered Enderby.

"Yes, yes, my lord Haman! We have already sent for him. It is long past the time." His brow darkened.

Sir Richard Mowbray stepped forward and said:

"Your Majesty, Lord Rippingdale is beyond obedience or reparation;" and then he gave the message of the dead man to John Enderby.

A month later Mowbray was permitted to return to Court, and with him came John Enderby and the Countess of Enderby. When Charles was told how matters had gone between the younger two, he gave vent to a mock indignation; and in consequence he made Sir Richard Mowbray an earl also, that, as he said, they might both be at the same nearness to him; for etiquette was tyrannical, and yet he did not know which of them he loved better!

As for the man so long dishonoured, Charles swore that since John Enderby came not to the King at Court, the King would go to him at Enderby. And go he did in good temper and in great friendship for many a year.

"THERE IS SORROW ON THE SEA"

"THERE IS SORROW ON THE SEA"

I

"York Factory, Hudson's Bay,
"23*rd September*, 1747.

"My Dear Cousin Fanny,—It was a year last April Fool's Day, I left you on the sands there at Mablethorpe, no more than a stone's throw from the Book-in-Hand Inn, swearing that you should never see me or hear from me again. You remember how we saw the coast-guards flash their lights here and there, as they searched the sands for me? how one came bundling down the bank, calling, 'Who goes there?' You remember that when I said, 'A friend,' he stumbled, and his light fell to the sands and went out, and in the darkness you and I stole away: you to your home, with a whispering, 'God-bless-you, Cousin Dick,' over your shoulder, and I with a bit of a laugh that, maybe, cut to the heart, and that split in a sob in my own throat—though you didn't hear that.

"'Twas a bad night's work that, Cousin Fanny, and maybe I wish it undone, and maybe I don't; but a devil gets into the heart of a man when he has to fly from the lass he loves, while the friends of his youth go hunting him with muskets, and he has to steal out of the back-door of his own country and shelter himself, like a cold sparrow, up in the eaves of the world.

"Ay, lass, that's how I left the fens of Lincolnshire a

year last April Fool's Day. There wasn't a dyke from Lincoln town to Mablethorpe that I hadn't crossed with a running jump; and there wasn't a break in the shore, or a sink-hole in the sand, or a clump of rushes, or a samphire bed, from Skegness to Theddlethorpe, that I didn't know like every line of your face. And when I was a slip of a lad—ay, and later too—how you and I used to snuggle into little nooks of the sand-hills, maybe just beneath the coast-guard's hut, and watch the tide come swilling in—water-daisies you used to call the breaking surf, Cousin Fanny. And that was like you, always with a fancy about everything you saw. And when the ships, the fishing-smacks with their red sails, and the tall-masted brigs went by, taking the white foam on their canvas, you used to wish that you might sail away to the lands you'd heard tell of from old skippers that gathered round my uncle's fire in the Book-in-Hand. Ay, a grand thing I thought it would be, too, to go riding round the world on a well-washed deck, with plenty of food and grog, and maybe, by-and-by, to be first mate, and lord it from fo'castle bunk to stern-rail.

"You did not know, did you, who was the coast-guardsman that stumbled as he came on us that night? It looked a stupid thing to do that, and let the lantern fall. But, lass, 'twas done o' purpose. That was the one man in all the parish that would ha' risked his neck to let me free. 'Twas Lancy Doane, who's give me as many beatings in his time as I him. We were always getting foul one o' t'other since I was big enough to shy a bit of turf at him across a dyke, and there isn't a spot on's body that I haven't hit, nor one on mine that he hasn't mauled. I've sat on his head, and he's had his knee in my stomach till I squealed, and we never could meet without back-talking and rasping 'gainst the

grain. The night before he joined the coast-guardsmen, he was down at the Book-in-Hand, and 'twas little like that I'd let the good chance pass—I might never have another; for Gover'ment folk will not easy work a quarrel on their own account. I mind him sittin' there on the settle, his shins against the fire, a long pipe going, and Casey of the *Lazy Beetle*, and Jobbin the mate of the *Dodger*, and Little Faddo, who had the fat Dutch wife down by the Ship Inn, and Whiggle the preaching blacksmith. And you were standin' with your back to the shinin' pewters, and the great jug of ale with the white napkin behind you; the light o' the fire wavin' on your face, and your look lost in the deep hollow o' the chimney. I think of you most as you were that minute, Cousin Fanny, when I come in. I tell you straight and fair, that was the prettiest picture I ever saw; and I've seen some rare fine things in my travels. 'Twas as if the thing had been set by some one, just to show you off to your best. Here you were, a slip of a lass, straight as a bulrush, and your head hangin' proud on your shoulders; yet modest too, as you can see off here in the North the top of the golden-rod flower swing on its stem. You were slim as slim, and yet there wasn't a corner on you; so soft and full and firm you were, like the breast of a quail; and I mind me how the shine of your cheeks was like the glimmer of an apple after you've rubbed it with a bit of cloth. Well, there you stood in some sort of smooth, plain, clingin' gown, a little bit loose and tumblin' at the throat, and your pretty foot with a brown slipper pushed out, just savin' you from bein' prim. That's why the men liked you—you didn't carry a sermon in your waist-ribbon, and the Lord's Day in the lift o' your chin; but you had a smile to give when 'twas the right time for it, and men never

said things with you there that they'd have said before many another maid.

"'Twas a thing I've thought on off here, where I've little to do but think, how a lass like you could put a finger on the lip of such rough tykes as Faddo, Jobbin, and the rest, keepin' their rude words under flap and button. Do you mind how, when I passed you comin' in, I laid my hand on yours as it rested on the dresser? That hand of yours wasn't a tiny bit of a thing, and the fingers weren't all taperin' like a simperin' miss from town, worked down in the mill of quality and got from graftin' and graftin', like one of them roses from the flower-house at Mablethorpe Hall—not fit to stand by one o' them that grew strong and sweet with no fancy colour, in the garden o' the Book-in-Hand. Yours was a hand that talked as much as your lips or face, as honest and white; and the palm all pink, and strong as strong could be, and warmin' every thread in a man's body when he touched it. Well, I touched your hand then, and you looked at me and nodded, and went musin' into the fire again, not seemin' to hear our gabble.

"But, you remember—don't you?—how Jobbin took to chaffin' of Lancy Doane, and how Faddo's tongue got sharper as the time got on, and many a nasty word was said of coast-guards and excisemen, and all that had to do with law and gover'ment. Cuts there were at some of Lancy's wild doings in the past, and now and then they'd turn to me, saying what they thought would set me girdin' Lancy too. But I had my own quarrel, and I wasn't to be baited by such numskulls. And Lancy—that was a thing I couldn't understand—he did no more than shrug his shoulder and call for more ale, and wish them all good health and a hundred a year. I never

thought he could ha' been so patient-like. But there was a kind of little smile, too, on his face, showin' he did some thinkin'; and I guessed he was bidin' his time.

"I wasn't as sharp as I might ha' been, or I'd ha' seen what he was waitin' for, with that quiet provokin' smile on his face, and his eyes smoulderin' like. I don't know to this day whether you wanted to leave the room when you did, though 'twas about half after ten o'clock, later than I ever saw you there before. But when my uncle come in from Louth, and give you a touch on the shoulder, and said: 'To bed wi' you, my lass,' you waited for a minute longer, glancin' round on all of us, at last lookin' steady at Lancy; and he got up from his chair, and took off his hat to you with a way he had. You didn't stay a second after that, but went away straight, sayin' good-night to all of us, but Lancy was the only one on his feet.

"Just as soon as the door was shut behind you, Lancy turned round to the fire, and pushed the log with his feet in a way a man does when he's thinkin' a bit. And Faddo give a nasty laugh, and said:

"'Theer's a dainty sitovation. Theer's Mr. Thomas Doane, outlaw and smuggler, and theer's Mr. Lancy Doane his brother, coast-guardsman. Now, if them two should 'appen to meet on Lincolnshire coast, Lord, theer's a sitovation for ye—Lord, theer's a cud to chew! 'Ere's one gentleman wants to try 'is 'and at 'elpin' Prince Charlie, and when 'is 'elp doesn't amount to anythink, what does the King on 'is throne say? He says, "As for Thomas Doane, Esquire, aw've doone wi' 'im." And theer's another gentleman, Mr. Lancy Doane, Esquire. He turns pious, and says, "Aw'm goin' for a coast-guardsman." What does the King on his throne say? 'E says, "Theer's the man for me."

But aw says, "Aw've doone, aw've doone wi' Mr. Lancy Doane, Esquire, and be damned to 'im!" He! he! Theer's a fancy sitovation for ye. Mr. Thomas Doane, Esquire, smuggler and outlaw, an' Mr. Lancy Doane, Esquire, coast-guardsman. Aw've doone. Ho! ho! That gits into my crop.'

"I tell you these things, Cousin Fanny, because I'm doubtin' if you ever heard them, or knew exactly how things stood that night. I never was a friend of Lancy Doane, you understand, but it's only fair that the truth be told about that quarrel, for like as not he wouldn't speak himself, and your father was moving in and out; and, I take my oath, I wouldn't believe Faddo and the others if they was to swear on the Bible. Not that they didn't know the truth when they saw it, but they did love just to let their fancy run. I'm livin' over all the things that happened that night—livin' them over to-day, when everything's so quiet about me here, so lonesome. I wanted to go over it all, bit by bit, and work it out in my head, just as you and I used to do the puzzle games we played in the sands. And maybe, when you're a long way off from things you once lived, you can see them and understand them better. Out here, where it's so lonely, and yet so good a place to live in, I seem to get the hang o' the world better, and why some things are, and other things aren't; and I thought it would pull at my heart to sit down and write you a long letter, goin' over the whole business again; but it doesn't. I suppose I feel as a judge does when he goes over a lot of evidence, and sums it all up for the jury. I don't seem prejudiced one way or another. But I'm not sure that I've got all the evidence to make me ken everything; and that's what made me bitter wild the last time that I saw you. Maybe you hadn't

anything to tell me, and maybe you had, and maybe, if you ever write to me out here, you'll tell me if there's anything I don't know about them days.

"Well, I'll go back now to what happened when Faddo was speakin' at my uncle's bar. Lancy Doane was standin' behind the settle, leanin' his arms on it, and smokin' his pipe quiet. He waited patient till Faddo had done, then he comes round the settle, puts his pipe up in the rack between the rafters, and steps in front of Faddo. If ever the devil was in a man's face, it looked out of Lancy Doane's that minute. Faddo had touched him on the raw when he fetched out that about Tom Doane. All of a sudden Lancy swings, and looks at the clock.

"'It's half-past ten, Jim Faddo,' said he, 'and aw've got an hour an' a half to deal wi' you as a Lincolnshire lad. At twelve o'clock aw'm the Gover'ment's, but till then aw'm Lancy Doane, free to strike or free to let alone; to swallow dirt or throw it; to take a lie or give it. And now list to me; aw'm not goin' to eat dirt, and aw'm goin' to give you the lie, and aw'm goin' to break your neck, if I swing for it to-morrow, Jim Faddo. And here's another thing aw'll tell you. When the clock strikes twelve, on the best horse in the country aw'll ride to Theddlethorpe, straight for the well that's dug you know where, to find your smuggled stuff, and to run the irons round your wrists. Aw'm dealin' fair wi' you that never dealt fair by no man. You never had an open hand nor soft heart; and because you've made money, not out o' smugglin' alone, but out o' poor devils of smugglers that didn't know rightly to be rogues, you think to fling your dirt where you choose. But aw'll have ye to-night as a man, and aw'll have ye to-night as a King's officer, or aw'll go damned to hell.'

"'Then he steps back a bit very shiny in the face, and his eyes like torchlights, but cool and steady. 'Come on now,' he says, 'Jim Faddo, away from the Book-in-Hand, and down to the beach under the sand-hills, and we'll see man for man—though, come to think of it, y'are no man,' he said—'if ye'll have the right to say when aw'm a King's officer that you could fling foul words in the face of Lancy Doane. And a word more,' he says; 'aw wouldn't trust ye if an Angel o' Heaven swore for ye. Take the knife from the belt behind your back there, and throw it on the table, for you wouldn't bide by no fair rules o' fightin'. Throw the knife on the table,' he says, comin' a step forward.

"'Faddo got on to his feet. He was bigger built than Lancy, and a bit taller, and we all knew he was devilish strong in his arms. There was a look in his face I couldn't understand. One minute I thought it was fear, and another I thought it was daze; and maybe it was both. But all on a sudden something horrible cunnin' come into it, and ugly too.

"'Go to the well, then, since ye've found out *all* about it,' he says, 'but aw've an hour and a half start o' ye, Lancy Doane.'

"'Ye've less than that,' says Lancy back to him, 'if ye go with me to the sands first.'

"At that my uncle stepped in to say a word for peacemakin', but Lancy would have none of it. 'Take the knife and throw it on the table,' he said to Faddo once more, and Faddo took it out and threw it down.

"'Come on, then,' Faddo says, with a sneerin' laugh; 'we'll see by daybreak who has the best o' this night's work,' and he steps towards the door.

"'Wait a minute,' says Lancy, gettin' in front of him. 'Now take the knife from your boot. Take it,' he says

again, 'or aw will. That's like a man, to go to a fist-fight wi' knives. Take it,' he said. 'Aw'll gi' ye till aw count four, and if ye doan't take it, aw'll take it meself. One!' he says steady and soft. 'Two!' Faddo never moved. 'Three!' The silence made me sick, and the clock ticked like hammers. 'Four!' he said, and then he sprang for the boot, but Faddo's hand went down like lightnin' too. I couldn't tell exactly how they clinched but once or twice I saw the light flash on the steel. Then they came down together, Faddo under, and when I looked again Faddo was lying eyes starin' wide, and mouth all white with fear, for Lancy was holding the knife-point at his throat. 'Stir an inch,' says Lancy, 'and aw'll pin ye to the lid o' hell.'

"Three minutes by the clock he knelt there on Faddo's chest, the knife-point touching the bone in's throat. Not one of us stirred, but just stood lookin', and my own heart beat so hard it hurt me, and my uncle steadyin' himself against the dresser. At last Lancy threw the knife away into the fire.

"'Coward!' he said. 'A *man* would ha' taken the knife. Did you think aw was goin' to gie my neck to the noose just to put your knife to proper use? But don't stir till aw gie you the word, or aw'll choke the breath o' life out o' ye.'

"At that Faddo sprung to clinch Lancy's arms, but Lancy's fingers caught him in the throat, and I thought surely Faddo was gone, for his tongue stood out a finger-length, and he was black in the face.

"'For God's sake, Lancy,' said my uncle, steppin' forward, 'let him go.'

"At that Lancy said: 'He's right enough. It's not the first time aw've choked a coward. Throw cold water on him and gi' 'im brandy.'

"Sure enough, he wasn't dead. Lancy stood there watchin' us while we fetched Faddo back, and I tell you, that was a narrow squeak for him. When he got his senses again, and was sittin' there lookin' as if he'd been hung and brought back to life, Lancy says to him: 'There, Jim Faddo, aw've done wi' you as a man, and at twelve o'clock aw'll begin wi' you as King's officer.' And at that, with a good-night to my uncle and all of us, he turns on his heels and leaves the Book-in-Hand.

"I tell you, Cousin Fanny, though I'd been ripe for quarrel wi' Lancy Doane myself that night, I could ha' took his hand like a brother, for I never saw a man deal fairer wi' a scoundrel than he did wi' Jim Faddo. You see, it wasn't what Faddo said about himself that made Lancy wild, but that about his brother Tom; and a man doesn't like his brother spoken ill of by dirt like Faddo, be it true or false. And of Lancy's brother I'm goin' to write further on in this letter, for I doubt that you know all I know about him, and the rest of what happened that night and afterwards.

"Dear Cousin Fanny,—I canna write all I set out to, for word come to me, just as I wrote the last sentence above, that the ship was to leave port three days sooner than was fixed for when I began. I have been rare and busy since then, and I have no time to write more. And so 'twill be another year before you get a word from me; but I hope that when this letter comes you'll write one back to me by the ship that sails next summer from London. The summer's short and the winter's long here, Cousin Fanny, and there's more snow than grass; and there's more flowers in a week in Mablethorpe than in a whole year here. But, lass, the

sun shines always, and my heart keeps warm in thinkin' of you, and I ask you to forgive me for any harsh word I ever spoke, not forgettin' that last night when I left you on the sands, and stole away like a thief across the sea. I'm going to tell you the whole truth in my next letter, but I'd like you to forgive me before you know it all, for 'tis a right lonely and distant land, this, and who can tell what may come to pass in twice a twelve-month! Maybe a prayer on lips like mine doesn't seem in place, for I've not lived as parson says man ought to live, but I think the Lord will have no worse thought o' me when I say, God bless thee, lass, and keep thee safe as any flower in His garden that He watereth with His own hand. Write to me, lass: I love thee still, I do love thee. DICK ORRY."

II

THE BOOK-IN-HAND INN,
MABLETHORPE, LINCOLNSHIRE.
May-Day, 1749.

"DEAR COUSIN DICK,—I think I have not been so glad in many years as when I got your letter last Guy Fawkes Day. I was coming from the church where the parson preached on plots and treasons, and obedience to the King, when I saw the old postman coming down the road. I made quickly to him, I know not why, for I had not thought to hear from you, and before I reached him he held up his hand, showing me the stout packet which brought me news of you. I hurried with it to the inn, and went straight to my room and sat down by the window, where I used to watch for your coming with the fishing fleet, down the sea from the Dogger Bank. I was only a girl, a young girl, then, and the

Dogger Bank was, to my mind, as far off as that place you call York Factory, in Hudson's Bay, is to me now. And yet I did not know how very far it was until our schoolmaster showed me on a globe how few days' sail it is to the Dogger Bank, and how many to York Factory.

"But I will tell you of my reading of your letter, and of what I thought. But first I must go back a little. When you went away that wild, dark night, with bitter words on your lips to me, Cousin Dick, I thought I should never feel the same again. You did not know it, but I was bearing the misery of your trouble and of another's also, and of my own as well; and so I said over and over again, Oh, why will men be hard on women? Why do they look for them to be iron like themselves, bearing double burdens as most women do? But afterwards I settled to a quietness which I would not have you think was happiness, for I have given up thought of that. Nor would I have you think me bearing trouble sweetly, for sometimes I was most hard and stubborn. But I lived on in a sort of stillness till that morning when, sitting by my window, I read all you had written to me. And first of all I must tell you how my heart was touched at your words about our childhood together. I had not thought it lay so deep in your mind, Cousin Dick. It always stays in mine; but then, women have more memories than men. The story of that night I knew; but never fully as you have told it to me in your letter. Of what happened after Lancy Doane left the inn, of which you have not written, but promised the writing in your next letter, I think I know as well as yourself. Nay, more, Cousin Dick. There are some matters concerning what followed that night and after, which I know, and you do not know.

But you have guessed there was something which I did not tell you, and so there was. And I will tell you of them now. But I will take up the thread of the story where you dropped it, and reel it out.

"You left the inn soon after Lancy Doane, and James Faddo went then too, riding hard for Theddlethorpe, for he knew that in less than an hour the coast-guards would be rifling the hiding-places of his smuggled stuff. You did not take a horse, but, getting a musket, you walked the sands hard to Theddlethorpe.

"I know it all, though you did not tell me, Cousin Dick. You had no purpose in going, save to see the end of a wretched quarrel and a smuggler's ill scheme. You carried a musket for your own safety, not with any purpose. It was a day of weight in your own life, for on one side you had an offer from the Earl Fitzwilliam to serve on his estate; and on the other to take a share in a little fleet of fishing smacks, of which my father was part owner. I think you know to which side I inclined, but that now is neither here nor there; and, though you did not tell me, as you went along the shore you were more intent on handing backwards and forwards in your mind your own affairs, than of what should happen at Theddlethorpe. And so you did not hurry as you went, and, as things happened, you came to Faddo's house almost at the same moment with Lancy Doane and two other mounted coast-guards.

"You stood in the shadow while they knocked at Faddo's door. You were so near, you could see the hateful look in his face. You were surprised he did not try to stand the coast-guards off. You saw him, at their bidding, take a lantern, and march with them to a shed standing off a little from the house, nearer to the shore. Going a roundabout swiftly, you came to the shed first,

and posted yourself at the little window on the sea-side. You saw them enter with the lantern, saw them shift a cider press, uncover the floor, and there beneath, in a dry well, were barrels upon barrels of spirits, and crouched among them was a man whom you all knew at once—Lancy's brother, Tom. That, Cousin Dick, was Jim Faddo's revenge. Tom Doane had got refuge with him till he should reach his brother, not knowing Lancy was to be coast-guard. Faddo, coming back from Mablethorpe, told Tom the coast-guards were to raid him that night; and he made him hide in this safe place, as he called it, knowing that Lancy would make for it.

"For a minute after Tom was found no man stirred. Tom was quick of brain and wit—would it had always been put to good purposes!—and saw at once Faddo's treachery. Like winking he fired at the traitor, who was almost as quick to return the fire. What made you do it I know not, unless it was you hated treachery; but, sliding in at the open door behind the coast-guards, you snatched the lantern from the hands of one, threw it out of the open door, and, thrusting them aside, called for Tom to follow you. He sprang towards you over Faddo's body, even as you threw the lantern, and, catching his arm, you ran with him towards the dyke.

"'Ready for a great jump!' you said. 'Your life hangs on it.' He was even longer of leg than you. 'Is it a dyke?' he whispered, as the shots from three muskets rang after you. 'A dyke. When I count three, jump,' you answered. I have read somewhere of the great leap that one Don Alvarado, a Spaniard, made in Mexico, but surely never was a greater leap than you two made that night, landing safely on the other side, and making for the sea-shore. None of the coast-

guardsmen, not even Lancy, could make the leap, for he was sick and trembling, though he had fired upon his own brother. And so they made for the bridge some distance above, just as the faint moon slipped behind a cloud and hid you from their sight.

"That is no country to hide in, as you know well,—no caves, or hills, or mazy coombes,—just a wide, flat, reedy place, broken by open wolds. The only refuge for both now was the sea. 'Twas a wild run you two made, side by side, down that shore, keeping close within the gloom of the sand-hills, the coast-guards coming after, pressing you closer than they thought at the time, for Tom Doane had been wounded in the leg. But Lancy sent one back for the horses, he and the other coming on; and so, there you were, two and two. 'Twas a cruel task for Lancy that night, enough to turn a man's hair grey. But duty was duty, though those two lads were more to each other than most men ever are. You know how it ended. But I want to go all over it just to show you that I understand. You were within a mile of Mablethorpe, when you saw a little fishing smack come riding in, and you made straight for it. Who should be in the smack but Solby, the canting Baptist, who was no friend to you or my uncle, or any of us. You had no time for bargaining or coaxing, and so, at the musket's mouth, you drove him from the boat, and pushed it out just as Lancy and his men came riding up. Your sail was up, and you turned the lugger to the wind in as little time as could be, but the coast-guardsmen rode after you, calling you to give in. No man will ever know the bitter trouble in Lancy's heart when he gave the order to fire on you, though he did not fire himself. And you—do I not know, Cousin Dick, what you did? Tom Doane was not the man to fire at the three dark

figures riding you down, not knowing which was his brother. But you, you understood that; and you were in, you said to yourself, and you'd play the game out, come what would. You raised your musket and drew upon a figure. At that moment a coast-guard's musket blazed, and you saw the man you had drawn on was Lancy Doane. You lowered your musket, and as you did a ball struck you on the wrist.

"Oh, I have thanked God a hundred times, dear Cousin Dick, that you fired no shot that night, but only helped a hunted, miserable man away, for you did get free. Just in the nick of time your sail caught the wind, and you steered for the open sea. Three days from that, Tom Doane was safe in the Low Country, and you were on your way back to Lincolnshire. You came by a fishing boat to Saltfleet Haven, and made your way down the coast towards Mablethorpe. Passing Theddlethorpe, you went up to Faddo's house, and, looking through the window, you saw Faddo, not dead, but being cared for by his wife. Then you came on to Mablethorpe, and standing under my window, at the very moment when I was on my knees praying for the safety of those who travelled by sea, you whistled like a quail from the garden below—the old signal. Oh, how my heart stood still a moment and then leaped, for I knew it was you! I went down to the garden, and there you were. Oh, but I was glad to see you, Cousin Dick!

"You remember how I let you take me in your arms for an instant, and then I asked if *he* was safe. And when you told me that he was, I burst into tears, and I asked you many questions about him. And you answered them quickly, and then would have taken me in your arms again. But I would not let you, for then

I knew—I knew that you loved me, and, oh, a dreadful feeling came into my heart, and I drew back, and could have sunk upon the ground in misery, but that there came a thought of your safety! *He* was safe, but you —you were here, where reward was posted for you. I begged you to come into the house, that I might hide you there, but you would not. You had come for one thing, you said, and only one. An hour or two, and then you must be gone for London. And so you urged me to the beach. I was afraid we might be seen, but you led me away from the cottages near to the little bridge which crosses the dyke. By that way we came to the sands, as we thought unnoted. But no, who should it be to see us but that canting Baptist, Solby! And so the alarm was given. You had come, dear Cousin Dick, to ask me one thing—if I loved you? and if, should you ever be free to come back, I would be your wife? I did not answer you; I could not answer you; and, when you pressed me, I begged you to have pity on me and not to speak of it. You thought I was not brave enough to love a man open to the law. As if—as if I knew not that what you did came out of a generous, reckless heart. And on my knees—oh, on my knees—I ought to have thanked you for it! But I knew not what to say; my lips were closed. And just then shots were fired, and we saw the coast-guards' lights. Then came Lancy Doane stumbling down the banks, and our parting—our parting. Your bitter laugh as you left me has rung in my ears ever since.

"Do not think we have been idle here in your cause, for I myself went to Earl Fitzwilliam and told him the *whole* story, and how you had come to help Tom Doane that night. How do I know of it all? Because I have seen a letter from Tom Doane. Well, the Earl prom-

ised to lay your case before the King himself, and to speak for you with good eager entreaty. And so, it may be, by next time I write, there will go good news to you, and—will you then come back, dear Cousin Dick?

"And now I want to tell you what I know, and what you do not know. Tom Doane had a wife in Mablethorpe. He married her when she was but sixteen—a child. But she was afraid of her father's anger, and her husband soon after went abroad, became one of Prince Charlie's men, and she's never seen him since. She never really loved him, but she never forgot that she was his wife; and she always dreaded his coming back; as well she might, for you see what happened when he did come. I pitied her, dear Cousin Dick, with all my heart; and when Tom Doane died on the field of battle in Holland last year, I wept with her and prayed for her. And you would have wept too, man though you are, if you had seen how grateful she was that he died in honourable fighting and not in a smuggler's cave at Theddlethorpe. She blessed you for that, and she never ceases to work with me for the King's pardon for you.

"There is no more to say now, dear Cousin Dick, save that I would have you know I think of you with great desire of heart for your well-being, and I pray God for your safe return some day to the good country which, pardoning you, will cast you out no more.

"I am, dear Cousin Dick,

"Thy most affectionate Cousin,

FANNY.

"Afterword—Dear Dick, my heart bursts for joy. Enclosed here is thy pardon, sent by the good Earl

Fitzwilliam last night. I could serve him on my knees for ever. Dick, she that was Tom Doane's wife, she loves thee. Wilt thou not come back to her? In truth, she always loved thee. She was thy cousin; she is thy Fanny. Now thou knowest all."

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